

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY IN ANTIQUITY

Edited by Vangelis Samaras



AURA SUPPLEMENT 14

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ΣΕΙΡΑ ΜΟΝΟΓΡΑΦΙΩΝ AURA 14



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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY IN ANTIQUITY

Proceedings of the International Hybrid Conference
held under the auspices of the Department of History
and Archaeology of the University of Athens

October 5–6, 2023

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In memory of Panos Valavanis
(1954–2025)

PREFACE

Much like Proteus, the sea god of Greek mythology, who constantly transformed himself to evade capture (e.g., *Od.* 4.417–418, 456–458; *Verg. G.* 4.405–411, 440–442), piracy in antiquity was a polymorphous phenomenon that continues to elude the analytical grasp of scholars. Historically, it constituted a dynamic and enduring force in the Mediterranean, functioning as an endemic feature of maritime life in numerous regions. Despite its profound significance in antiquity, the study of piracy has traditionally been the purview of historians, relying almost exclusively on textual evidence. By contrast, archaeology has remained surprisingly peripheral to this discourse, despite its inherent potential to complement and enrich historical narratives through material evidence. The archaeological record possesses the unique capacity not only to test the accuracy of written sources, but also to extend the scope of research into eras and regions where textual evidence is silent or absent. It is precisely this imbalance between the dominance of historical approaches and the relative reticence of archaeology that calls for a methodological shift, bringing material evidence to the forefront of the investigation.

An effort to address the archaeological approach to piracy in antiquity lay at the core of the research project “From Archaeology of Piracy to Pirate Archaeology: Piracy in the Greek Seas from Prehistoric to Roman Times” (A.P.Pir.A.). The project was funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I.) under the “2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers” (Project Number: 34). Hosted by the Department of History and Archaeology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (N.K.U.A.) from January 2021 to June 2024, the A.P.Pir.A. project was brought to fruition by the editor of the present volume as Principal Investigator, alongside a dedicated team of early-career researchers: Orestis Goulakos, Nadia Giagkoudaki, Panagiotis Gounelas, Alexandra Malliou, Konstantinos Pantzouris and Dimitris Sakkas.

In the final stage of the project, the international hybrid conference “The Archaeology of Piracy in Antiquity” was held under the auspices of the Department of History and Archaeology of the N.K.U.A., and the present volume constitutes the proceedings of that conference. Almost all papers presented during the sessions are included here; regrettably, a small number could not be finalized in time for this publication. However, the collection is enriched by two significant contributions that were not originally presented at the conference. I am deeply grateful to Adam Dawson, Nicholas Rauh and George Koutsouflakis for their willingness to contribute to this volume. Their papers, focusing respectively on the Phournoi archipelago and Cilicia, two areas with a notorious pirate past, offer crucial insights through significant methodological approaches, including underwater archaeology, surface survey and GIS-based analysis.

It is evident that the archaeological investigation of piracy represents an arduous undertaking marked by multiple conceptual and methodological challenges, both as a general concept and specifically within the context of antiquity. Piracy is elusive by nature, often leaving behind ambiguous or indirect material traces that resist straightforward interpretation. It was never the intention of a small research team, nor the goal of a single conference, to exhaustively cover such a vast subject or to provide definitive answers. Rather, the aim was to initiate a meaningful scholarly dialog, stimulate critical reflection and encourage a broader range of researchers to engage with the archaeological dimensions of piracy. The emphasis was placed on raising questions rather than resolving them, on opening new avenues of inquiry rather than consolidating established interpretations. In this sense, the volume should be understood as a point of departure rather than a conclusion.

In a collective endeavor such as this, the contribution of many individuals is indispensable. I extend my sincere thanks to all the conference participants and the authors of this volume, each of whom contributed, through their unique perspective, to initiating an academic dialog on the archaeology of piracy in antiquity. I am also indebted to the anonymous external peer reviewers for their careful and constructive comments, which contributed significantly to the high scholarly standard of the volume. Special thanks are due to the members of the A.P.Pir.A. Advisory Committee for their unwavering support from the very outset: Professor Emerita Nota Kourou, Professor Emerita Nagia Sgouritsa, Professor Yiannis Papadatos, Professor Lefteris Platon, Associate Professor Stelios Katakis, Assistant Professor Marlen Mouliou and the late Professor Panos Valavanis (all of the N.K.U.A.). All the aforementioned also served on the Scientific Committee of the conference, which was further distinguished by the participation of: Professor Emerita Pavlina Karanastasi (University of Crete), Professor Konstantinos Kopanias (N.K.U.A.), Professor Eleni Manakidou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Professor Alexandros Mazarakis Ainian (University of Thessaly), Professor Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (Heidelberg University), Professor Dimitris Plantzos (N.K.U.A.), Professor Manolis Stefanakis (University of the Aegean), Professor George Vavouranakis (N.K.U.A.), Professor Andreas Vlachopoulos (University of Ioannina), Associate Professor Nikolas Dimakis (N.K.U.A.), Associate Professor Eurydice Kefalidou (N.K.U.A.), Associate Professor Antonis Kotsonas (New York University), Assistant Professor George Koutsouflakis (University of Thessaly) and Assistant Professor Vassilis Petrakis (N.K.U.A.). I would like to thank Prof. Dimitris Plantzos, Dr. Photeini Ball and Dr. Michel Roggenbucke (N.K.U.A.) for their kind willingness to assist with the practical administration of the A.P.Pir.A. project. I would also like to thank the members of the A.P.Pir.A. team, Orestis, Nadia, Panagiotis, Alexandra, Konstantinos and Dimitris, for accompanying me on this journey. Finally, my heartfelt gratitude goes to Katerina Boukala, who, with exceptional professionalism, dedication and patience, succeeded in transforming our collective effort into this book.

A few months before the completion of this volume, the archaeological community lost Panos Valavanis. Long before the A.P.Pir.A. project took its final form, he had been one its most enthusiastic supporters, firmly believing in both the scholarly relevance and the wider potential of what we come to call the “archaeology of piracy”.

Those who had the privilege of working with him will remember not only his academic stature, but also his exceptional ability to inspire younger scholars to think boldly and independently. For this reason, the iconic final scene of the film *Dead Poets Society* offers a particularly fitting image: Panos Valavanis was among that rare breed of mentors who inspire their students to stand upon their desks in a gesture of profound respect and tribute.

Farewell, my Captain.

Vangelis Samaras

January 2026



An Introduction to the Archaeology of Piracy

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ABSTRACT

This study serves as the introduction to the volume The Archaeology of Piracy in Antiquity and aims to survey scholarship on ancient piracy, while primarily assessing the possibilities and limitations of an archaeological approach to the phenomenon. The paper is structured in two main parts. The first part offers a concise overview of research on ancient piracy from the late 19th century to the present and addresses a series of key issues, including the definition of piracy and the fluidity of its boundaries, the range and forms of pirate activity, the social and ethnic heterogeneity of pirates, the complex relationship between piracy and trade, the varied responses of official authorities and social perceptions of piracy in the ancient world. The second part focuses on the archaeology of piracy. It begins by outlining the history of archaeological research in this field and the methodological challenges posed by the difficulty of linking pirate activity to specific archaeological evidence. It then introduces the A.P.Pir.A. project, which sought to develop a framework for the meaningful integration of piracy into archaeological discourse through the study of the phenomenon in the Greek seas from the Final Neolithic to the Roman period (ca. 4000 BCE – 330 CE). The paper further explores the ways in which piracy can be approached archaeologically by drawing on different categories of material evidence, such as settlements, fortifications, funerary assemblages and iconography, in direct dialog with the individual contributions to the volume. It concludes with reflections on future directions of research, emphasizing that, despite inherent methodological challenges, piracy can be documented through material culture. From this perspective, archaeology is shown to contribute not only to the identification of piracy as a historical phenomenon but also to a deeper understanding of its social and economic impact in the ancient world.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

“Pirates always used to harass those who sailed the sea, even as brigands did those who dwelt on land. There was never a time when these practices were unknown, nor will they ever cease probably so long as human nature remains the same” (Cass. Dio 36.20.1, trans. E. Cary, London and New York, 1914). The accuracy of Cassius Dio’s remark is borne out even today: despite the existence of powerful state and transnational organizations with the technological capacity to eradicate piracy altogether, pirate activity persists unabated in critical sea-lanes throughout the globe. The present volume addresses aspects of the earliest phases in the long history of piracy, with a particular emphasis on assessing the potential of an archaeological approach to the phenomenon.

This introductory chapter outlines the emerging field of the archaeology of piracy. It first provides a concise survey of the numerous studies on piracy in antiquity, from the late 19th century to the present. Attention is then drawn to specific issues that are essential to the scholarly investigation of piracy, both ancient and more recent. This is followed by an overview of the development of the archaeology of piracy, tracing its trajectory from

initial investigations to its current status as a nascent sub-discipline of archaeological research. The subsequent section presents the A.P.Pir.A. project (full title: “From Archaeology of Piracy to Pirate Archaeology: Piracy in the Greek Seas from Prehistoric to Roman Times”), which provided the basis for the preparation of this volume. The A.P.Pir.A. project represents part of a broader initiative, launched in the current century, to address piracy systematically through the analysis of archaeological evidence. The introduction concludes with a brief discussion of specific categories of material culture that preserve traces of ancient piracy and related activities, as illustrated by the contributions to this volume.

Although the main focus is placed on antiquity, the volume closes with two studies, one by George Koutsouflakis and one by George Koutzakiotis, that address piracy in the early modern era. Owing to their comparatively abundant body of material and textual evidence, these studies offer insights that are of considerable value for the investigation of ancient piracy and its archaeological dimensions. Finally, it should be mentioned that, in the case of collective volumes devoted to ancient piracy, references have been provided not only to the volumes themselves, but also to nearly all the individual chapters they contain. The advantage of this editorial decision is to make this introduction a comprehensive point of departure and a useful guide for future research into the phenomenon of piracy in antiquity.

PIRACY IN ANTIQUITY: A CENTURY AND A HALF OF SCHOLARSHIP

Research on piracy in antiquity dates back roughly a century and a half to Jules M. Sestier’s pioneering study *La piraterie dans l’antiquité* (1880). Most early works (e.g., Sestier 1880; Ormerod 1922, 1923, 1924a, 1924b; Ziebarth 1929) attempted to present broad historical overviews of ancient piracy based on Greek and Latin textual information. Others, such as Ellen C. Semple (1916) and John A. Davison (1930), analyzed ancient piracy along more specific lines: Semple examined the geographical and economic conditions that fostered Mediterranean piracy, while Davison briefly considered Cicero’s role in the promulgation of the *Lex Gabinia*, the law that granted Pompey extraordinary and unprecedented powers to suppress piracy in 67 BCE. He treated it more as a vehicle of Roman Republican politics than as piracy per se. This pioneering phase of research was characterized more by comprehensive treatment of the source tradition than by critical methods of analysis; the works tend to furnish narrative descriptions, often echoing ancient authors’ moralizing tones and treating “piracy” as a transhistorical phenomenon that warranted little explanation. Ormerod’s synthesis (Ormerod 1942a) at least attempted to identify typologies of maritime predation and regional patterning, whereas Semple’s geographical lens foreshadowed later attention to the environmental and economic constraints on piracy.

A second phase of research, extending from the 1960s to the end of the 20th century, comprises more synthetic treatments, such as the studies by Yvon Garlan (1978, 1987), Benedetto Bravo (1980) and William K. Pritchett (1991), as well as the studies by David Tandy (1997) and Alastair H. Jackson (1973, 1995, 2000) on pirates in Early Iron Age (EIA) and Archaic Greece, respectively. The bulk of scholarly attention, however, tended to focus on the Hellenistic and Roman periods (e.g., Dell 1967; Maróti 1968, 1970; Hassall et al. 1974; Ward 1975, 1977; Lintott 1976; Crawford 1977; Brulé 1978, 1999; Clavel-Lévêque 1978; Sumner 1978; Mattingly 1980; Ducrey 1983; Gabbert 1986; Marasco 1987; Braund 1993; Tramonti 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Herz 1995; Ferone 1997; Ager 1998; Günther 1999; Perlman 1999). Here the analysis becomes more analytical, with scholars interrogating legal categories, state responses and the political economy of violence. Micro-regional case studies, such as piracy in Crete, Cyclades and Cilicia (e.g., Brulé 1978; Ducrey 1983; Marasco 1987; Perlman 1999), likewise began to replace trans-Mediterranean narratives.

A milestone in the treatment of ancient piracy occurred with the publication of Philip de Souza’s *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (1999), the first systematically argued and critically documented synthesis to map piracy from the Archaic period through Late Antiquity. De Souza integrated literary and epigraphic evidence with historiographical reassessment, to reframe “piracy” less as a fixed social phenomenon than as a propagandistic

label deployed by states and *poleis* against shifting security threats; his careful source criticism tempered inherited stereotypes and restores the blurred boundary between warfare, piracy and trade. Since its appearance, the book has been treated by those working on ancient piracy as a central point of reference. Other studies by de Souza have likewise proven valuable (e.g., de Souza 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2018). Also important are the contributions of Vincent Gabrielsen (e.g., 1997, 2001, 2003, 2013), whose research focuses on Hellenistic Rhodes but has significantly advanced understanding of several facets of ancient piracy, including its economic dimensions, its relationship to trade and the raid mentality. Gabrielsen complements this by modeling how maritime powers organized protection and coercion, embedding piracy within institutional and fiscal logics. Together the studies of these two scholars normalize the view that ancient piracy is best approached as a spectrum of practices rather than a single juridical category.

The work of de Souza and Gabrielsen has, directly or indirectly, energized research on ancient piracy, as evidenced by the proliferation of studies in the first decades of the current century. Once again, much of this literature has focused on specific issues in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (e.g., Schulz 2000; Tsetschladze 2000–2001; Woods 2001, 2006; Šašel Kos 2002; Wiemer 2002; Arslan 2003; Nocita and Guizzi 2005; Beek 2006, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2020, 2022; Baldwin Bowsky 2007; Ugurlu Anadolu 2008; Mendoni 2009; Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas 2010, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2022; Osgood 2010; Criscuolo 2013; Tarwacka 2016, 2019, 2022; Tozan 2016; Berdowski 2017; Day 2017; Hamon 2018; Romano 2018; Lewis 2019; Schwameis 2019; Deuling 2020; Pacheco 2020; Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas and Ferrer Albelda 2021). In addition to these papers, several doctoral theses and monographs devoted to piracy have emerged, including those by Alfonso Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas (2008), Anna Tarwacka (2009) and Clément Varenne (2013). Also noteworthy is Heidrun Derks's concise and elegant volume (2016), which offers a clear and accessible overview of ancient Mediterranean piracy.

Beyond individual contributions, several collective volumes now signal a more systematic, multi-perspectival approach to the phenomenon:

- *La pirateria nell'Adriatico antico*, edited by L. Braccesi (2004; see Bandelli 2004; Ceka 2004; Davies 2004; Di Filippo Balestrazzi 2004; Ferone 2004; Fuscagni and Marcaccini 2004; Lombardo 2004; Medas 2004; Mihovilić 2004; Nava 2004; Pianezzola 2004; Raviola 2004; Sassatelli 2004; Zambon 2004),
- *Piraterie von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Volker Grieb and Sabine Todt (2012; see de Souza 2012; Grieb 2012a, 2012b; Meissner 2012; Todt and Grieb 2012),
- *Seeraub im Mittelmeerraum*, edited by Jaspert and Kolditz (2013; see Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas 2013a; Gabrielsen 2013; Gilan 2013; Krampe 2013; Linke 2013),
- *Piratería y seguridad marítima en el Mediterráneo Antiguo*, edited by Alfonso Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas, Eduardo Ferrer Albelda, and Enrique García Vargas (2013; see Alvar Nuño 2013; Álvarez Jiménez 2013; Álvarez-Ossorio Rivas 2013b; Arrayás Morales 2013; Chic García 2013; de Souza 2013b; Domínguez Monedero 2013; Ferrer Albelda 2013; Fornis 2013; García Ríaza 2013; Puig Palerm 2013; Sala Sellés et al. 2013),
- *Latrocinium maris: Fenomenologia e repressione della pirateria nell'esperienza romana e oltre*, edited by Ida Gilda Mastroianni (2018a; see Arena 2018; Bartoloni 2018; de Souza 2018, 2018; Fiorentini 2018; Lentano 2018; Mastroianni 2018b, 2018c; Tarwacka 2018),
- *Piracy, Pillage and Plunder in Antiquity: Appropriation and the Ancient World*, edited by Richard Evans and Martine De Marre (2020; see Beek 2020; Evans 2020; McAuley 2020; Roth 2020; Trundle 2020).

Taken together, these volumes consolidate comparative perspectives and move beyond Roman-centric frameworks by foregrounding regional ecosystems (Aegean, Adriatic, eastern and western Mediterranean). They also foster debates on key issues, such as the status of the so-called Cilician “pirate state”, the interpretation of Pompey's campaign as either security theater or structural reform and the interconnections between piracy, slave supply and credit, thus establishing shared research agendas rather than an assemblage of discrete contributions.

The study of ancient piracy has now advanced beyond its treatment as a timeless scourge or a minor footnote in naval history. The field increasingly understands piracy as a historically contingent and context-dependent repertoire of practices, shaped by shifting political economies, security regimes and cultural perceptions. This reframing has freed scholarship from uncritical reliance on ancient authors' moralizing narratives, simplistic stereotypes and prejudices, allowing instead for more nuanced analyses of how communities, *poleis* and empires constructed, negotiated and instrumentalized the label of *piracy*.

ANCIENT PIRACY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: CONCEPTS, SOCIAL REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS

Beyond the label: towards a critical definition of ancient piracy

Fernand Braudel (1973, 866) aptly stated that the phenomenon of piracy is “as old as history”; however, the same cannot be said for the term *piracy* (on the language of ancient piracy see, for instance, MacDonald 1984; Ferone 1997, 43–67; 2008; de Souza 1999, 2–13; Pianezzola 2004). The earliest known occurrence of the word appears in a mid-3rd century BCE inscription from Rhamnous in Attica (SEG XXIV 154, line 22; de Souza 1999, 3–4; for a translation and comprehensive analysis see <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/AIO/823>). This does not imply, however, that the practice of piracy did not exist prior to that time. For example, both Homer and Thucydides describe individuals who, in modern terminology, would be characterized as pirates, even though the term they employ is *robbers* (λῆιστῆρες, e.g., Hom. *Od.* 3.73, 17.425, or λῆσται, e.g., Thuc. 1.8.1, 6.4.5; for piracy in the Homeric epics see Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming, with further references). In several instances, even this term is omitted and the pirate nature of the behavior has to be inferred from the context.

Not long after its first attestation, the term *pirate* acquired a distinctly negative connotation. Almost invariably the pirate is portrayed as the “other” – the outsider, the foreigner, the villain. Rarely does an individual define himself as a pirate, while conversely there are numerous instances in which third parties apply the term selectively, depending on their relationship with the person in question. A striking example is Nabis, king of Sparta in the late 3rd and early 2nd century BCE. While ancient authors such as Polybius (13.8.2) and Livy (34.32.18, 34.36.3) describe him as a pirate, the demos of Delos in an honorary decree proclaims him a *proxenos* and benefactor (IG XI.4 716, lines 9–10; for further discussions on Nabis see Mendels 1979; Karafotias 1998; Brulé 1999; see also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume). This discrepancy is not unique. Similar dynamics appear in other contexts, such as in the varying depictions of Cilician seafarers, who are alternately presented as pirates, allies or even clients, depending on the political alignment of the sources (see Dawson and Rauh, this volume). Such examples demonstrate how piracy, far from being a fixed category, is part of a contested vocabulary of power, legitimacy and control of mobility.

The selective application of the label *pirate* underscores its fundamentally relational and perspectival nature: in ancient written sources (and in later ones as well) it operates less as an objective descriptor and more as a rhetorical and ideological tool. Thus, any scholarly engagement with ancient piracy must not only catalog instances of the term's usage, but also interrogate the sociopolitical stakes embedded in those usages. Acts should be evaluated as piracy (or not) according to clearly defined parameters, rather than merely based on whether ancient observers classified them as such.

The definitional clarification of piracy offers a means –albeit a partial one– of addressing persistent methodological challenges in the study of the phenomenon. One such challenge arises from the inconsistent and often imprecise use of terminology. In numerous studies, terms such as *pirates*, *privateers*, *freebooters*, *filibusters*, *buccaneers* and *corsairs* are employed without sufficient attention to their semantic distinctions (see Table 1 in Dawdy and Bonni 2012, which provides a useful comparative overview). Although the idea of universally accepted definitions –applicable across historical periods, geographic contexts and socio-political settings– would be desirable, the very nature of piracy renders this goal unattainable. What recent scholarship

has demonstrated is that piracy can assume an array of forms, each shaped by unique historical, social, and geographical circumstances, and that subtle yet important distinctions distinguish each and every form. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that they all represent subcategories of a broader experience of piracy.

In studies focusing specifically on ancient piracy, the problem of defining piracy is far more pronounced. In some instances, no definition is provided, presumably because the concept is taken for granted; in others, definitions are provided but vary widely, as each scholar attempts to create a unique working framework, often out of dissatisfaction with existing ones. For instance, Henry A. Ormerod (1924a, 60) cites the English legal definition of piracy as an act of robbery and violence at sea, which, if committed on land, would constitute a felony because it lacks the authorization of a sovereign state. Philip de Souza (1999, 1) describes pirates more concisely as “armed robbers whose activities normally involve the use of ships”. Such inconsistency highlights the conceptual and methodological challenges involved in the study of ancient piracy. If the phenomenon is difficult to define, it logically follows that placing it in its proper historical context is equally challenging.

During the initial stages of the A.P.Pir.A. project (see below), it became clear that while existing definitions address key aspects of piracy, none could fully encompass the complexity and variability of the phenomenon. One of the first steps of the project, therefore, was to adopt a working definition – one that is informed by earlier scholarship, but one that is also tailored to the specific aims of the investigation. According to this definition, an act qualifies as piracy when it fulfills the two following criteria: as is widely acknowledged in the literature (e.g., de Souza 1999, 1–2; Bradford 2007, xi; Skowronek 2016, 4), piracy must constitute an act of robbery inherently linked to the maritime sphere, regardless of whether ships are directly employed; in addition, the primary motive of piracy must be private economic gain (Samaras 2015, 191; see also Knapp 2018, 36).

This definitional framework proves useful in addressing two major conceptual challenges for the study of piracy. The first concerns the nature of a pirate’s relationship to the sea. Contemporary perceptions –heavily influenced by literary and cinematic representations– associate pirates inextricably with ships and seafaring life. Historically, however, this connection was not universal. While pirates frequently utilized ships to launch attacks against other vessels or to conduct coastal raids, there are documented instances in which they operated without ships. Practices such as the looting of shipwrecks –a common occurrence in antiquity, particularly in regions prone to maritime accidents (e.g., Strabo 5.4.2; 7.6.1; Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 37; Tsatskhladze 2000–2001, 13; see also Rougé 1966; Mataix Ferrándiz 2022)– and, even more strikingly, the deliberate orchestration of shipwrecks for the purpose of plunder, constitute a peculiar form of “land-based” piracy (see more in Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming).

The second major issue addressed by the proposed definition is the distinction between piracy and warfare. Numerous recorded instances concerned raids that transpired during military conflicts, however much they resemble piracy in both their tactical execution and their underlying motivation. The difficulty in distinguishing between these two forms of organized violence (piracy and warfare) has already been noted by several scholars (e.g., Wachsmann 1998, 317–21; de Souza 1999, 31–6; Emanuel 2021, 24–9). As previously argued (Samaras 2015, 189–91), the fundamental difference lies in the nature of the action: war, even when economically motivated, is essentially political in character, whereas piracy belongs to the economic realm and lacks any clear political agenda. This conceptual distinction is by no means modern. Fernand Braudel (1973, 867) characterized piracy as “a means of making a living,” noting, in his discussion of the Algerian corsairs, that “if the corsairs came home empty-handed there would be famine in Algiers”. Much earlier, Aristotle had similarly identified raiding (*ληστρον βίος*) as one of the fundamental modes of subsistence, alongside pastoralism, fishing, hunting and agriculture (*Pol.* 1256a–b; see also Xen. *Cav.* 8.8). Of course, this differentiation between piracy and war exists primarily at a theoretical level. In reality, the boundaries between the two are often blurred. Nevertheless, the distinction remains analytically useful, as it emphasizes that regardless of the ideological or political justifications that were sometimes attached to it, piracy was, first and foremost, an economic pursuit.

It should be noted that, although the contributors affiliated with the A.P.Pir.A. project (Nadia Giagkoudaki, Panagiotis Gounelas, Konstantinos Pantzouris and Dimitris Sakkas) base their analyses in this volume on the

aforementioned criteria, no attempt has been made to enforce a uniform definition across all papers. Each author retains the freedom to adopt the interpretive framework they consider most appropriate for their specific case studies.

From opportunistic acts to pirate fleets: the spectrum of ancient piracy

Piracy in antiquity can be categorized according to several distinct forms, depending on both the nature of the operation and the profile of its targets. These include direct attacks by one ship against another in open waters; raids launched from multiple ships against unprotected coastal or near-coastal targets, such as isolated farmsteads, rural shrines or pastoral groups; full-scale assaults on larger settlements or even urban centers; and the plundering of shipwrecks – whether resulting from natural causes or deliberately orchestrated by local inhabitants along treacherous coastlines. Some of these activities, particularly shipwrecking and opportunistic raiding, occurred in a gray area between piracy, salvage and subsistence predation, especially in economically marginal regions (see below).

Beyond this typology, it is important to consider the range and degrees of organization within pirate activity. At the most rudimentary level, piracy could consist of isolated and opportunistic acts, such as a merchant vessel abducting a lone shepherd or fishermen appropriating cargo from a wreck. Such events were neither systematic nor premeditated, but rather ad hoc responses to immediate prospects of gain. At a more complex level, however, piracy could assume forms of semi-permanent, structured organizations. Ancient literary sources describing the Cilician pirates of the late Hellenistic period (ca. 139–67 BCE) attest to the existence of pirate flotillas, fortified bases and long-range operations targeting major maritime routes and wealthy sites, including prominent sanctuaries (e.g., Strabo 14.5.2; App. *Mith.* 14.92–93; Plut. *Pomp.* 24.2–5; see more in Dawson and Rauh, this volume). Earlier examples include the Cretan and Aitolian *poleis* of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, which are portrayed as having incorporated piracy into their formal diplomatic and economic practices (on Cretan and Aitolian piracy, see Brulé 1978; de Souza 1999, 70–6, 80–4; Perlman 1999; on “state” piracy by Phalasarna and its colony Aigilia, see Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume). These examples challenge simplistic dichotomies between statehood and criminality and invite a more dynamic understanding of ancient piracy as a phenomenon operating across multiscalar social, economic and political environments.

Who were the pirates? The social and ethnic heterogeneity of pirate crews

The conventional portrayal of a pirate as a marginal and socially deviant figure –rejected by or alienated from the norms of settled society– is problematized by both archaeological and historical evidence from antiquity and subsequent periods. Rather than existing entirely outside the social fabric of settled communities, pirates frequently lived within them, resided in ordinary dwellings and participated to varying degrees in local economic and social life. From a socio-economic perspective it seems clear that piracy was not necessarily a phenomenon restricted to a particular social stratum. Individuals from across the social spectrum could engage in pirate activity, either directly or indirectly. The participation of elites –whether aristocratic landowners, military leaders or hinterland warlords– should not be regarded as exceptional. On the contrary, access to ships, crews and extensive political or military contacts often made it easier for members of higher social orders to initiate and to sustain maritime raiding. A characteristic example is Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos in the third quarter of the 6th century BCE, whose naval power and pirate activity are explicitly noted by Herodotus (3.39.3–4). Polycrates not only used piracy to amass wealth, but he also used it to project power across the eastern Aegean and beyond, thus illustrating how piracy could be incorporated by elite figures into broader strategies of state-building and regional dominance. Similar dynamics are evident with the late Hellenistic Cilician pirate networks mentioned above, where pirate bands, according to several ancient authors (e.g., Strabo 14.5.2; App. *Mith.* 14.92), operated under the protection or with the complicity of local rulers and by drawing support from otherwise peaceful coastal populations. These pirates established semi-permanent bases throughout the Mediterranean and main-

tained control over maritime routes by engaging in a medley of raiding and commercial exchanges (see more in Dawson and Rauh, this volume).

Conversely, individuals from lower social strata also participated in piracy, though typically through different avenues. Many served as crew members or engaged in raiding on a temporary or ad hoc basis, having been drawn into pirate activity through economic hardship, displacement resulting from conflict or the collapse of traditional subsistence lifeways. For example, one plausible scenario –previously proposed by the present author (Samaras 2015, 193)– is that, following the disintegration of the Mycenaean palatial system in the Postpalatial Aegean, “the unemployed mercenaries of the Palatial period” continued to deploy their martial expertise independently, turning to, among other activities, piracy as a means of survival and wealth acquisition.

An important aspect of pirate identity –potentially relevant for archaeological interpretation– is the social and ethnic heterogeneity of pirate crews. Although direct evidence is often limited, textual sources attest to the fact that these groups often comprised individuals from diverse geographic origins and socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting the translocal, interwoven nature of seaborne raiding parties and the flexible structures that supported them. For example, Appian reports that the Cilician pirate fleets of the late Hellenistic period comprised not merely Cilicians, but also “men of Syrian, Cyprian, Pamphylian, and Pontic origin and those of almost all the Eastern nations” (*Mith.* 14.92, trans. H. White, New York, 1899). It is safe to assume, therefore, that the collective designation *Cilicians* most probably referred to pirate bands whose origins were ethnically heterogeneous.

The social origin of individuals engaged in piracy also most likely shaped the motivation of those who pursued such activity. For people originating from marginal, resource-scarce environments –such as arid islands, mountainous coasts or depopulated rural zones– piracy plausibly represents one of the only available means of subsistence or economic advancement. In contexts of pronounced social inequality, where wealth and status were as a rule inherited and beyond the reach of impoverished elements, piracy offered an alternative route to power, prestige and sometimes even to formal authority. For those of elite status, piracy served different, though complementary, functions: it enabled the accumulation of wealth, the demonstration of martial skill and the reinforcement or expansion of social influence. In this regard, piracy functioned not only as an economic activity but as a socio-political mechanism embedded within local and regional dynamics of power, status and survival.

Piracy and trade: rethinking an apparent paradox

Very often, scholars or commentators assert that interruptions in maritime trade during a given period were likely attributable to piracy or, conversely, that periods of flourishing commercial activity demonstrated an absence of piracy. Underlying such views is the self-evident assumption that piracy worked as a disincentive to maritime trade. However, the historical reality is far more complex. Longitudinal studies of piracy clearly demonstrate that maritime trade not only persisted but often thrived during periods of intense pirate activity. This apparent paradox challenges linear models of economic disruption and invites a more nuanced interpretation of the historical relationship between piracy and trade.

Vincent Gabrielsen, a scholar who has studied the significant upsurge in piracy during the Hellenistic period, emphasizes that commercial centers prospered during this upsurge throughout the Aegean (Gabrielsen 2001, 220–23; 2013, 147–53; see also Gabrielsen 2003, which focuses in particular on the relationship between piracy and a distinct form of commercial activity, namely, the slave-trade). His analysis discredits the simplistic duality of trade versus piracy and instead proposes a model of functional coexistence, wherein pirate enterprise was structurally integrated into broader patterns of economic exchange. As Fernand Braudel has observed (1973, 887), this positive correlation between piracy and trade is not unique to antiquity, but extends into more recent periods as well. The reasons for this seem clear: maritime trade provided the necessary structural conditions –the targets, the sea-lanes and the maritime markets– for piracy to thrive and to prevail. Typically, following

a successful pirate venture pirates would engage in forms of exchange to realize the value of their plunder, for example, to exchange whatever goods they had plundered for those they actually needed. Contrary to the romanticized portrayals in literature and film, pirates did not hoard treasure in caves or bury it beneath the sand. Rather, they raided ships and settlements, seized portable goods and subsequently entered the commercial orbit themselves –licitly or illicitly– to convert their booty into profit. As Philip de Souza aptly observed (de Souza 1999, 56), “piracy itself could be considered as a form of trade”. As such, it was extremely commonplace for some individuals to alternate between piracy and mercantile activity, depending on the circumstances and the calculated prospects of financial gain. This fluidity between roles reflects not merely opportunism, but a socio-economic continuum within which violence, commerce and illegality frequently overlapped.

The *Odyssey* offers several illustrations of this dynamic. In the Cretan tale that Odysseus relates to Eumaeus, a Phoenician merchant decides to sell the “son of Castor” into slavery (*Od.* 14.287–298). The scenario is then repeated by a group of Thesprotian traders (*Od.* 14.334–359). Likewise, Eumaeus recounts that he himself was abducted by Phoenician merchants after they had stayed in his homeland “for a whole year [...] and traded for much substance” (*Od.* 15.455–456, trans. J.E. Huddleston, <https://topostext.org/work/3>). These episodes are not so much narrative embellishments as they are culturally grounded reflections of a world in which the boundaries between trade and raiding were permeable, and where seafaring groups could assume multiple identities depending on context and objectives.

Official responses to piracy: suppression, toleration and collaboration

Another issue that merits critical attention is the relationship between legitimate authority and piracy – a relationship that ranges from overt hostility to open collaboration. While the antagonistic stance of states or local powers toward piracy may appear natural or even inevitable, it must be emphasized that this hostility was by no means hypothetical. Throughout antiquity, a number of political and military authorities actively pursued large-scale campaigns to suppress piracy. Occasionally, ancient literary sources attributed the eradication of sea-borne piracy to a particular figure, such as Minos (*Thuc.* 1.4.1, 1.8.1–2) or Jason (*Plut. Thes.* 19.4). Historical figures, like Themistocles (*Nep. Them.* 2.1–4) and Cimon (*Plut. Cim.* 8.5), were likewise credited with clearing the seas of pirates. Naval powers, including Corinth (*Thuc.* 1.13.5), Athens (*Aristid. Or.* 13.113), Rhodes (*Diod. Sic.* 20.81.3; *Strabo* 14.2.5; *Aristid. Or.* 44.570), and Rome (*Cic. Leg. Man.* 33; *Strabo* 14.3.3; *App. B Civ.* 2.1.1; *Mith.* 14.95), earned widespread reputations for policing the seas and keeping them safe from pirates. Nevertheless, despite these confident assertions by ancient sources, the actual effectiveness of anti-piracy operations appears to have been limited, especially with regard to any long-term impact. Even in the case of the most renowned anti-piracy campaign, that of Pompey in 67 BCE, modern scholars (e.g., de Souza 1999, 179–85; Tröster 2009, esp. 28–31; Lampinen 2022, 52–3) have significantly questioned ancient testimony that Pompey eradicated piracy once and for all (e.g., *Cic. Leg. Man.* 33; *App. B Civ.* 2.1.1; *Mith.* 14.95; *Flor.* 3.6.13–15; *Oros.* 6.4.1). Such assertions appear to have been shaped or amplified by Roman political propaganda intended to glorify Pompey’s extraordinary efficiency and military competence as a commander. Scholars have expressed similar concerns regarding the success of Rhodian anti-piracy efforts, the actual effectiveness and long-term consequences of which appear to warrant closer scrutiny, despite the assertions of ancient sources (see Kalmpourtzi, this volume).

Alongside these repressive strategies, there is substantial evidence of cooperation and complicity between official powers and pirate actors. Pirates frequently depended on the collaboration of or toleration by authorities, frequently by offering a share in their stolen gain in exchange for strategic advantages. These might include access to safe harbors during storms or while attempting to evade pursuit, as well as access to marketplaces, where they could dispose of their plunder and procure essential supplies. Conversely, political and military leaders often collaborated openly with pirates by actively recruiting their naval expertise, local knowledge and combat skills to further strategic goals or to undermine rivals.

This symbiotic dynamic between piracy and political authority is attested in various periods of antiquity with abundant examples of blurred boundaries, where piracy overlapped with state-sanctioned raiding. In Classical Athens, for instance, the state occasionally collaborated with pirates on military expeditions and otherwise disguised quasi-pirate campaigns under the guise of official military operations – particularly in periods of resource scarcity (e.g., Thuc. 4.9.1; Xen. *Hell.* 4.8.35). During the Hellenistic period, several *poleis* –most notably Aitolian and Cretan *poleis*– were notorious for harboring and collaborating with pirates. Aitolian leaders frequently employed pirate tactics for territorial expansion and population control (e.g., Polyb. 4.3.1–4.1, 4.9.9). Cretan *poleis* often served as pirate bases, offering infrastructure, markets and even political protection. As Philip de Souza observes (de Souza 1999, 98), “it is clear that many Hellenistic rulers and communities preferred to benefit from piracy rather than attempt its suppression”. Indeed, during this particular era, state authorities exhibited such extraordinary tolerance of piracy, if not outright cooperation therewith, that the pattern of state-sponsored piracy corresponded to that of a widening intensification of piracy across the eastern Mediterranean. One striking example is provided by Demetrius I Poliorcetes’ use of pirates as auxiliary forces to disrupt maritime communication and support naval operations during his famous siege of Rhodes in 305/4 BCE (e.g., Diod. Sic. 20.82.5–83.1, 20.97.5; see also de Souza 1999, 43–6). Equally illustrative is the response of Queen Teuta of Illyria to the Roman ambassadors who protested against the repeated attacks on Roman shipping by Illyrian pirates in the Adriatic: “[...] it was contrary to the custom of the Illyrian kings to hinder their subjects from gaining booty from the sea” (Polyb. 2.8.8, trans. W.R. Paton, London and New York, 1922). This declaration epitomizes a mode of governance, where piracy was not only tolerated by a royal authority but effectively sanctioned as legitimate customary practice. In other instances, piracy was not merely tolerated but directly financed, organized and politically instrumentalized. Numerous examples attest to the use of pirates as instruments of state power or as formally employed mercenaries. In short, there is ample historical evidence of authorities who shielded and supported pirate activity – be that through passive toleration, covert cooperation or active sponsorship. As Vincent Gabrielsen rightly noted (Gabrielsen 2013, 135), “piracy and statehood are intimately connected.

Whose side are you on? Moral relativity and the perception of piracy in antiquity

Referring to the “early times”, namely, the period prior to the 5th century BCE, in which he himself lived, Thucydides remarked that “this occupation [piracy] did not yet involve disgrace, but rather conferred something even of glory” (Thuc. 1.5.1, trans. C.F. Smith, Cambridge, Mass., 1920). This observation is corroborated by a typical greeting of the Homeric poems, according to which locals, upon the arrival of an unknown ship, would ask whether the newcomers are traders or pirates:

“Who are you, strangers? From where did you sail the watery ways?

On some business, or did you roam at random,

even as pirates over the sea, who roam

and risk their lives and bring evil to foreigners?”

(Hom. *Od.* 3.71–74, 9.252–255, trans. J.E. Huddleston, <https://topostext.org/work/3>; see also *Hymn.*

Hom. Ap. 452–455).

On the strength of this passage, and especially the authority of the great Athenian historian, it is often asserted (e.g., Ormerod 1924a, 97; Garland 1978; van Wees 1992, 257–58; Cavazzuti 2004, 46; Lewis 2019, 82) that, prior to the 5th century BCE, piracy was not only tolerated but viewed as a legitimate path to prestige and honor within one’s community, whereas, following the rise of *polis* society, it was morally condemned and socially rejected (for piracy in the EIA Aegean see Samaras 2015; Gounelas, this volume).

The evidence of the Homeric poems points, however, to a more complex moral landscape than Thucydides’ concise remark implies. A telling example is furnished by the persona that Odysseus invents in his conversation

with Eumaeus, where he impersonates the son of Castor from Crete (Hom. *Od.* 14.199–359). Here piracy appears as a legitimate form of livelihood: raiding, pillaging and warfare are presented as established and even admirable ways of acquiring wealth, enhancing status and gaining respect:

“For before the sons of the Achaeans set foot on Troy,
I’d led men and swift-sailing ships nine times
against foreign men, and very many things fell to me,
from which I picked out many choice ones, and many later
came to me by lot. My house soon prospered, and thereafter
I became feared and revered among the Cretans.”

(Hom. *Od.* 14.229–234, trans. J.E. Huddleston, <https://topostext.org/work/3>).

Yet, when the pseudo-Cretan’s fortunes change and he himself falls prey to pirates, his tone shifts and he condemns the very practices he formerly embraced (for detailed discussion see Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming):

“a Phoenician came then, a man expert in lying tales,
a gnawer, who’d done many evils to men,
[...] he put me on a seafaring ship to Libya,
falsely advising me that I’d be bringing back cargo with him,
but so he could sell me there and get an untold price for me.”
“an evil plan about me pleased their minds,
so that I’d still be brought completely to a calamity of woe.”

(Hom. *Od.* 14.288–297, 337–338, trans. J.E. Huddleston, <https://topostext.org/work/3>).

Such ambivalence was not confined to the Homeric society; comparable attitudes can be traced across antiquity and beyond. Perceptions of piracy were often shaped by one’s point of view: those who participated in or benefited from it could depict it as normal, even heroic, whereas, victims of piracy and communities excluded from its gains viewed it as illicit, reprehensible and unjust. For the researcher of ancient piracy this twofold perspective seems crucial: moral judgement was not necessarily fixed, but rather contingent upon one’s position vis-à-vis the practice.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY: FROM MARGINAL NOTES TO EMERGING FIELD

Until the early 21st century, archaeological investigations linked to piracy remained sparse and largely incidental. Since the 2000s, however, scholarly interest in the archaeology of piracy has increased significantly, with a growing number of studies exploring the phenomenon through material remains. Among the most systematic contributions are the edited volumes by Russell Skowronek and Charles Ewen (2006, 2016, 2023), Jean Soulat (2019) and Lynn Brenda Harris and Valerie Ann Johnson (2022), which collectively represent key milestones in the development of the field (see also Hartnett and Dawdy 2013). Unsurprisingly, these works concentrate on the so-called “Golden Age of Piracy” (late 17th to early 18th century), focusing primarily on the Caribbean Sea and, to a lesser extent, the Indian Ocean. In contrast, the Eastern Mediterranean, and particularly the

Greek seas, has yet to see comparable systematic archaeological engagement, despite evidence of sustained pirate and privateer activity throughout the early modern period (e.g., Krantonelli 1985, 1991, 1998; Harlaftis et al. 2016). Recent studies by George Koutzakiotis (2023, this volume) demonstrate the potential of integrating archaeological research with the rich documentary evidence of the period, revealing promising avenues for the study of piracy in this region.

A similar paucity of archaeological studies is evident for piracy in classical antiquity. A pioneering example linking specific archaeological finds to the phenomenon of piracy was advanced by Antonios Keramopoulos (1923, 42–3), who argued that the seventeen shackled individuals uncovered during Konstantinos Kourouniotis and Stratis Pelekidis' excavations at Phaleron were probably pirates executed for their deeds (see also Bosnakis 2020, 159–69). Otherwise, references to piracy in the archaeological literature have been few and, when they do appear, they are typically brief and interpreted from a victims' perspective. Some have pointed to the numerous Late Classical and Hellenistic towers situated on islands and along the eastern Mediterranean mainland coast, to suggest that these functioned as bastions to protect coastal communities and private landowners from pirate raids (e.g., Ormerod 1924a, 41–3; 1924b, 31–2; Young 1956, 132–33; Osborne 1986, 173–74; Pritchett 1991, 352–58; Seifried and Parkinson 2014, 310). Likewise, the intense piracy that plagued the Aegean in the first half of the 1st century BCE has led many scholars to attribute the contemporaneous evidence of violent destruction at Delos to pirate raids that are reported to have occurred there in 88 and 69 BCE (e.g., Mattingly 1980; Rauh 1993, 68; Hatzidakis 1997, 293, 307; Siebert 2001, 93; Rotroff 2014). Vassilis Lambrinoudakis (1981, 161; 1987–1988, 299) has suggested that a destruction layer dated to the early 1st century BCE at the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas in Epidauros is likewise attributable to a pirate assault.

In addition to studies that rely on archaeological data to address the likely impact of piracy on the wider public, some researchers have attempted to utilize archaeological remains to identify the likely habitats and operational bases of pirates themselves. Probably the most systematic archaeological research of ancient piracy to date is the Rough Cilicia Archaeological Survey Project, directed by Nicholas Rauh (1997, 2003, 2004, 2019; see also Rauh et al. 2000, 2009, 2013, Kaye and Rauh 2020, Hoff et al. 2024, as well as Dawson and Rauh, this volume), which, from 1996 to 2014, attempted to identify the settlements and hideouts of the notorious Cilician pirates along the coast of modern day Gazipasha, Turkey (for the Cilician pirates see also Avidov 2008; Zoroğlu 2009; Tomaschitz 2013). Beginning in the mid-1980s, Elpida Hadjidaki (2001, 2015, 2020) has been directing the systematic excavation of ancient Phalasarna, a *polis* in western Crete closely associated with Hellenistic piracy. Since 2000, Aris Tsaravopoulos (2015, 2023; see also Johnston et al. 2012; Kozatsas et al. 2014; Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume) has been excavating the site of Antikythera, a colony of Phalasarna, that is likewise presumed to have functioned as a pirate base. Meanwhile, Adonis Kyrou (1990, 137–41; 1996–1997; see also Lolos 2006) has persuasively argued that the fortified hill of Choriza on the island of Hydra served as a base for Samian pirates, who were active around 530 BCE. Yet another category of remains plausibly linked to piracy, those of ancient shipsheds, straddles the boundary between terrestrial and underwater archaeology (Baika 2007–2008; Blackman et al. 2013, 238–41; see also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume on the shipshed at Antikythera).

This last-mentioned category (shipsheds) shifts attention to the main stage of pirate operations, namely the sea, and to the material evidence recovered by underwater archaeology. The methodological challenges confronting underwater archaeologists who attempt to associate underwater remains with piracy notwithstanding (see Gianfrotta 1981, 2001, 2013, and Koutsouflakis, this volume), several finds recovered through marine archaeology have gained credence in the discussion. These include a helmet containing part of a human skull that was recovered from the early 1st-century BCE at Spargi in the Madalena Archipelago (Gianfrotta 1981, 2001, 2013; Cavazzuti 1997, 2004; Bruni 2013).

Perhaps the most significant underwater discovery to date to conjure the prospect of piracy is undoubtedly the wreck of the ancient merchant ship found near Kyrenia, in northern Cyprus. The Kyrenia shipwreck is dated quite precisely due to its closed context of cargoes to 294–290 BCE. Scholars have raised compelling arguments

to suggest that this vessel was attacked by pirates and deliberately scuttled (Schmitt and Kieburg 2016; Berlin 2019; Katzev and Swiny 2023, esp. 41–2). A similar explanation has been proposed for the charred remains of a late 5th-century BCE shipwreck at Peristera in the Northern Sporades: that it may have sunk as a result of fire (Hadjidaki 1996, 590–91; see also Mantzouka 2004, 6, 111). Such an explanation has been disputed by the excavator, who argued that piracy did not become a serious problem in the Northern Sporades until the mid-4th century BCE (e.g., Dem. 12.12–13; for piracy in the Northern Sporades during early modern times, see also the contributions by G. Koutzakiotis and K. Pantzouris in this volume). However, this argument is open to question, since the assumption that piracy posed a lesser problem during the 5th century BCE is not sufficiently substantiated by the available evidence. According to ancient sources, the practice of scuttling or setting fire to prizes to avoid detection was commonplace among pirates, so much so that the 5th century CE bishop and grammarian Isidore of Seville (*Etym.* 10.220) erroneously asserted that the term *πειρατής* (pirate) derives from *πυρά*, the ancient Greek word for fire. Accordingly, one cannot rule out the possibility that both the Peristera and the Spargi shipwrecks, the latter of which likewise displayed evidence of firing (Gianfrotta 2013, 54), resulted from pirate ambushes.

Although the archaeology of piracy in classical antiquity is relatively underexplored, the study of piracy in prehistoric periods remains even more neglected.

Initial attempts to address Bronze Age piracy were vague, generalized and devoid of any systematic or in-depth investigation (e.g., Renfrew 1972, 440, 763; Basch 1986, 429–33; Dumas 1988, 27–9; Agouridis 1997, 20; Nowicki 2001, 36–7). Most recently, a few scholars have attempted to treat the evidence of piracy during the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (e.g., Tzovaras 2020, 17; Yeagley 2022). Significant progress has been made regarding the likely impact of piracy during the transitional period from the Late Bronze Age (LBA) to the EIA, a period of major socio-political transformation, with several recent studies employing fresh, methodologically rigorous, data-driven approaches (e.g., Artzy 1997; Lurangi 2006; Jung 2009, 2018; Kramer-Hajos 2009; Gilan 2013; Samaras 2015; Marazzi 2018; Knapp 2018, 2020; Kopanias 2019; Vikatou 2019). At the forefront stand Jeffrey Emanuel (2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021), Louise Hitchcock and Aren Maeir (2014, 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), whose contributions have played a pivotal role in reconceptualizing and deepening our understanding of maritime predation in the eastern Mediterranean at this time. However, despite a partial increase in scholarly interest in the archaeology of piracy, the phenomenon remains largely absent from archaeological interpretations. This omission is often due either to the preference for more conventional explanations –for instance, imported objects are typically interpreted as evidence of trade or elite gift exchange– or to an implicit assumption that piracy, as a historically elusive and mobile practice, leaves no imperceptible trace in the archaeological record.

The methodological difficulty of identifying the archaeological remains of piracy has been emphasized by numerous scholars (e.g., Cavazzuti 2004, 51; Baika 2007–2008, 56, 61, 68; Bruni 2013, 766; Gianfrotta 2013, 53; Hartnett and Dawdy 2013, 40; Rauh 2019, 49). The problem stems primarily from the fact that the material remains of pirates are often indistinguishable from those of wider, “law-abiding”, society. For example, structures and ships employed by pirates frequently resembled those employed by the general public, in the same manner that the destruction inflicted on an ancient settlement by a pirate raid might resemble that of a military assault. What seems crucial is that archaeologists assess the question within an interpretive framework, one that considers piracy as a fluid, dynamic phenomenon with the potential to shape local and regional economies and, at times, to catalyze political and social transformations in any given era. This interpretive framework is precisely what the A.P.Pir.A. project has intended to create.

THE A.P.Pir.A. PROJECT: INVESTIGATING THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ANCIENT PIRACY

Scope and objectives

Hosted by the Department of History and Archaeology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the A.P.Pir.A. project transpired between January 2021 and June 2024, with funding from the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation. The research team consisted of seven archaeologists, led by the present author as principal investigator, alongside Nadia Giagkoudaki, Orestis Goulakos, Panagiotis Gounelas, Alexandra Malliou, Konstantinos Pantzouris and Dimitris N. Sakkas. Throughout the duration of the project, this small group of early-career researchers attempted to construct a spatially diachronic approach to the archaeology of piracy. Our aim was to develop a framework through which piracy could be meaningfully integrated into the archaeological discourse, a framework sufficiently broad to incorporate evidence of piracy across the breadth of the eastern Mediterranean Sea and across a timeframe extending from the Final Neolithic to the Roman era (ca. 4000 BCE – 330 CE).

Methodology and research implementation

The project unfolded in four distinct stages. The initial phase focused on piracy in classical antiquity, specifically from the Archaic to the Roman period. This decision has the obvious advantage of drawing on the information provided by literary sources about piracy to allow for more comprehensive analysis. Textual references provide the added value of furnishing detailed information about piracy that can be cross-referenced against the extensive archaeological record of the same era.

To facilitate systematic documentation and analysis, the team developed a digital database using the open-source online platform Heurist. Design by the author of this paper, the database is intended to record, manage and analyze material drawn from a wide range of ancient Greek and Latin sources (e.g., historical narratives, oratory and inscriptions) that contain either explicit or implicit allusions to pirate activity in the Greek maritime world during the period in question. The entries –compiled primarily by A.P.Pir.A. research team members Orestis Goulakos and Konstantinos Pantzouris– amount to nearly 500 records and have yielded tremendous insights into the historical evolution of piracy in classical antiquity, the operational strategies of pirates and the manner in which they were perceived by their contemporaries. This database constitutes a comprehensive repository that will facilitate the systematic study of ancient piracy through textual evidence.

For example, the analysis of the statistical data derived from the database reveals that, while piracy appears to have been a continually recurring phenomenon throughout classical antiquity, the Hellenistic period (323–27 BCE) stands out as a peak moment of pirate activity, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean basin. These findings validate two fundamental conclusions: first, that piracy constituted an endemic feature of the maritime landscape of classical antiquity; and second, that sustained efforts to suppress piracy by naval powers, such as Athens, Rhodes and Rome, achieved limited and temporary success at best (on this issue see de Souza 1999, 38–41, 48–53, 83–4, 161–78, 184, 204–10; Lampinen 2022, 52–3; also, on Rhodes and Rome's campaigns against piracy, see respectively Kalmpourtzi, and Dawson and Rauh, this volume).

Following the study of the written sources, a systematic correlation was undertaken between the archaeological evidence and the data extracted from the database. This process facilitated the formulation of specific archaeological criteria and attributes derived from the material record that may under certain conditions be applicable to the phenomenon of piracy. For example, a list of representative features emerged that appear to characterize an archaeologically identifiable *pirate base*, that is, a settlement where a portion of the population, however large or small, engaged occasionally or habitually in piracy. The scale of such bases ranges widely from small encampments to full-fledged cities. Importantly, the material remains of these sites often do not diverge significantly from those of conventional settlements, thereby making their identification all the

more challenging. Nevertheless, pirate bases do tend to display fundamental recurring traits that assist with their recognition. These can be grouped into four broad thematic categories:

1. Chronological context

- Evidence that a given site was occupied during a period when piracy is known to have been prevalent in the vicinity. Establishing the habitational time frame of a settlement within the context of known piratical disturbances seems prerequisite to drawing a connection between the two.

2. Spatial and geomorphological characteristics

- Site selection: Pirate bases are frequently situated in coastal areas that offer concealment or limited visibility from the sea and/or mainland. These sites exploit natural topographical advantages, yet are strategically positioned in proximity to important maritime routes.
- Suitability for pirate operations: Pirate suitability is typically linked to topographical features, such as bays, coves or natural harbors, that facilitate ambushes, provide shelter and enable eavesdropping on passing sea traffic. In certain instances, the suitability of a location is further corroborated by the chronological reuse of the exact same site or an adjacent location as pirate bases, most likely because the physical and strategic advantages of the site lent themselves to recurring use by pirates over time.
- Anomalous sites and finds: Some sites are situated in locations that appear, at first glance, wholly unsuitable for permanent habitation or harbor development (e.g., barren terrain, lack of accessible anchorages). When settings such as these reveal the presence of “unanticipated” valuable, high-status artifacts, the likelihood that they served an atypical or illicit function becomes archaeologically relevant.

3. Functional and structural features

- Short-lived occupation: Particularly in the case of small settlements, the archaeological record may point to a temporally limited or episodic occupation, often interpreted as opportunistic or purpose-built, rather than part of a long-term habitation pattern.
- Fortification systems: In addition to natural defenses, some sites exhibit evidence of artificial reinforcement through constructed fortifications, thus, indicating the need for protection from land-based or maritime threats.

4. Material and cultural indicators

- Maritime orientation: The assemblages of finds and features at such sites often indicate a strong connection between the inhabitants’ economic or subsistence strategies and the sea. This may be reflected in the presence of maritime artifacts, infrastructure or iconographic motifs.
- Martial character: The presence of weaponry, martial iconography or other artifacts associated with the use of violence may point to a community familiar with or habituated to armed conflict. While such indicators are not exclusive to piracy, their co-occurrence with other characteristics described above strengthens the argument for pirate occupation.

It should be emphasized that the presence of one or even several of these traits does not by itself confirm the identification of a given site as a pirate base. Nor is the combination of all these features required to justify such an interpretation. Obviously, the greater the number and consistency of such indicators at a given site, the more compelling the need to include pirate activity within a range of archaeological interpretations. For instance, the application of the above criteria, in conjunction with the analysis of literary sources on ancient piracy, led Konstantinos Pantzouris to propose that the fortified site at Kastraki on Agathonisi may not have served solely as a defensive outpost safeguarding Miletus and its maritime trade against the pirates, who were particularly active in the region during the Hellenistic period. Rather, the site itself may have participated in pirate activity –likely targeting non-Milesian interests– thereby functioning both as a protective and a predatory node within the complex maritime landscape of the time (see Pantzouris, this volume).

The establishment of archaeological criteria for the identification of piracy enabled the team to proceed to the second phase of the project, namely the investigation of piracy during periods, when archaeological data

constitute the primary, or even sole, source of information due to a lack of literary sources, for example the periods extending from the Final Neolithic to the EIA (ca. 4000–700 BCE), mentioned above. The team divided this broad timeframe into four chronological segments: Nadia Giagkoudaki examined the Final Neolithic to EBA, Dimitris N. Sakkas focused on the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) to LBA I–II, the present author studied the LBA III, while the EIA was investigated jointly by Panagiotis Gounelas and the present author.

The results of this study are particularly promising and highlight the potential for advancing our understanding of piracy through archaeological inquiry. As demonstrated in the contributions to this volume by members of the A.P.Pir.A. project, secure correlations between specific archaeological sites or assemblages and evidence for piracy are both limited and problematic. This is demonstrated by the paper of Dimitris N. Sakkas in this volume, who tackles the challenging task of examining piracy during the MBA and early LBA. Nonetheless, as both Nadia Giagkoudaki's study on the origins of piracy in the EBA Aegean and Panagiotis Gounelas' examination of those during the EIA in this volume indicate, this difficulty stems primarily from our limited understanding of the phenomenon. They each propose ways to show how pirate activity conceivably provides a distinct archaeological signature, even in these early periods.

Dissemination and public engagement

As part of the A.P.Pir.A. project, the Museum of Cycladic Art (MCA) participated as a collaborating institution, for the purpose of undertaking both the design and the production of an educational program featuring piracy in antiquity. Upon completion of the research phase, the A.P.Pir.A. research team submitted a detailed report to the MCA's Department of Educational and Social Programs. This report marked the beginning of the project's third phase, which was intended to develop the educational component. The report included extensive data on ancient piracy, descriptions of relevant archaeological sites and finds, as well as suggestions for the educational program's structure and activities. Drawing on this material, the MCA's team of dedicated museologists proceeded to generate the educational program, entitled "Piracy in the Cyclades". Directed toward an audience of students age eight and above, the program comprises teaching resources, suggested activities and an educational board game. As Eleni Markou elaborates in her contribution to this volume, the program was designed for flexible use both within the MCA and in school settings, ensuring nation-wide accessibility for teachers and students alike.

The final phase of the A.P.Pir.A. project focused on the dissemination of its research outcomes. The international hybrid conference "The Archaeology of Piracy in Antiquity", held under the auspices of the Department of History and Archaeology of the NKUA on October 5–6, 2023, along with the publication of its proceedings in the present volume, represent key elements of this effort. The decision to organize an international hybrid conference stemmed from the research team's intent not only to present the results of our work, but also to engage with scholars working on related aspects of ancient piracy in order to generate a productive academic dialog.

Beyond the international conference, the A.P.Pir.A. team undertook a variety of additional activities intended to promote communication and dissemination. Among them was the participation of Panagiotis Gounelas and the present author in the international hybrid conference "Nostoi II: Traveling in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and Inland Routes from the Early Bronze Age to the End of the Early Iron Ages", held at the Acropolis Museum from 11 to 13 November 2022. The conference proceedings, soon to be published under the editorship of Konstantinos Kopanias, Çiğdem Maner, Nikolaos Stampolidis and Ioannis Fappas, will include our paper entitled "'Who Are You, Strangers?' The Contribution of the Homeric Epics to the Study of Ancient Piracy". This study explores the phenomenon of piracy as it appears in the Homeric epics and examines the usefulness of these literary sources to the investigation of piracy in antiquity (Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming).

Additionally, the present author has prepared a study entitled "Fortifications in the Middle and Late Bronze Age Aegean: When, Where and Why?", which is forthcoming in the edited volume *Polemika: Perceptions of Warfare in the Bronze Age Aegean*, to be published under the direction of Kyriakos Grigoropoulos, Angelos

Papadopoulos and Vassilis Petrakis (Samaras forthcoming). This detailed paper focuses on the fortification systems of central and southern mainland and insular Greece during the MBA and LBA. Its primary objective is to assess the various factors that prompted their construction. The analysis suggests that, with minimal exception, the Aegean region experienced persistent insecurity throughout the second millennium BCE. This insecurity appears to have been driven sometimes by local competition and at other times by the endemic phenomenon of piracy. Piracy seems to have played a particularly significant role during the Postpalatial period (ca. 1200–1050 BCE), potentially serving as the primary impetus behind the fortification of numerous coastal and island settlements.

Throughout the duration of the A.P.Pir.A. project, the team paid particular attention to outreach initiatives intended to engage the broader public. Chief among these was the aforementioned educational program developed by the MCA. In addition, the project maintained a consistent presence on social media through its Facebook page (*APPirA – Archaeological Research Project*) and Instagram account (*@appira_project*), both of which were managed by Alexandra Malliou. These platforms were used to showcase dissemination activities and selected research findings, as well as to present various aspects of ancient piracy in a clear and accessible manner. The public response was remarkably positive, indicating substantial interest in the topic and highlighting the degree to which the archaeology of piracy resonates with wider audiences. Finally, a dedicated YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@APPirAProject>) was created to host video recordings of the presentations delivered at the international hybrid conference. These were made publicly available with the consent of the participants.

Research outcomes and archaeological challenges

As a concise evaluation of the research results of the A.P.Pir.A. project, the findings can be described as highly encouraging. The project successfully identified specific sites that either conceivably served as pirate bases or were assaulted by pirate raids and it recognized potential components of pirate activity across various categories of artifacts (e.g., pottery, rock-engravings, seals). Furthermore, the research demonstrated that during the extensive time frame under consideration, the levels of pirate activity in the Greek seas varied significantly, ranging from isolated incidents of piracy to sustained periods of piracy capable of influencing the outcome of political events. Periods of heightened pirate activity, identified with varying degrees of certainty, include the EBA II (ca. 2700–2200 BCE), the Postpalatial period (ca. 1200–1050 BCE), the Geometric period (ca. 900–700 BCE), the Archaic period (ca. 700–480 BCE) and the Hellenistic period (ca. 323–67 BCE). Notably, these phases often coincide with episodes of political disintegration, economic disturbance or weakened public authority – highlighting the interplay between piracy and wider societal transformations.

Perhaps even more significantly, the project contributed to a deeper understanding of the fundamental challenges that confront the archaeology of piracy. As mentioned above, pirates rarely left behind material evidence of their activities, and when they did, such traces were often indistinguishable from those of contemporary “law-abiding” communities. The A.P.Pir.A. project underscores the limitations of traditional archaeological paradigms, which have too often underestimated the archaeological signature of piracy or dismissed it as archaeologically “invisible” or marginal. In addition, the project revealed two key findings that suggest that an archaeological approach to piracy is indeed feasible, despite the methodological challenges: (1) Despite regional and chronological variations, piracy exhibited distinct diachronic features, not only in terms of operational practices and areas of activity but also in terms of the perceptions of piracy that prevailed in public consciousness; (2) Pirate activity does leave a strong archaeological signature, which is detectable when subjected to innovative, interdisciplinary and critically reflexive methodologies. Only through such approaches can the archaeology of piracy move beyond the perception of an elusive or marginal phenomenon and establish itself as a productive field of inquiry, capable of offering new insights into the dynamics of maritime violence and its impact on ancient societies.

TRACING ANCIENT PIRATES IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Identifying ancient pirate bases

The results of the A.P.Pir.A. project, together with the studies presented in this volume, underline both the challenges and the prospects of developing an archaeology of piracy. Despite methodological and interpretive difficulties, archaeological research has proven capable of identifying sites that may have functioned as pirate bases across different regions and periods. Well-known examples include Choriza on Hydra, Phalasarna in western Crete and Antikythera (see above; also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume). Furthermore, some of the contributions to this volume point to potential pirate involvement at other sites of classical antiquity (particularly during the Hellenistic period), such as Kastraki on Agathonisi (Pantzouris) and the islet of Antidragonera, close to Kythera (Markakis).

Crucially, the field is no longer confined to historical periods with textual evidence but now extends to prehistoric and proto-historical contexts. Sites such as Strophilas on Andros and Vathy on Astypalaia indicate possible pirate activity already in the Late Neolithic and Early Helladic I periods (Giagkoudaki). The likelihood appears even greater at certain Early Cycladic settlements (Angelopoulou; Giagkoudaki), with the site of Kastri on Syros standing out alongside those of Panormos on Naxos, Kynthos on Delos and Markiani on Amorgos. In the LBA, and particularly in its final stages, several sites in Cyprus (e.g., Pyla-Kokkinokremos, Maa-Palaiokastro) and Crete (e.g., Pseira, Mochlos, Kastri at Palaikastro, Elias to Nisi, Kalo Chorafi, Korakia on Dia, Kastrokephala) likely served, at least in part, as pirate bases (Driessen; Vokotopoulos). Comparable patterns persist through the transition to the EIA and across the period itself, as evidenced by Meganisi in the Inner Ionian Archipelago (Vikatou and Staikou) and by a series of coastal and island sites in the Aegean that are discussed by Panagiotis Gounelas.

The systematic reconsideration of such sites as potential pirate bases will contribute to the identification of the structural and spatial characteristics of early pirate settlements and to the elucidation of their material culture. This perspective is particularly valuable at locations where pirate activity appears to have been more than episodic, constituting instead a communal way of life, as has been suggested with the examples of Pyla-Kokkinokremos in Cyprus and Meganisi in the Inner Ionian Archipelago (Driessen; Vikatou and Staikou).

Topography and persistent pirate activity

Several studies in this volume emphasize the importance of coastal topography to the location of recurring pirate disorders. Contributions by Adam Dawson and Nicholas Rauh on Cilicia, George Koutsouflakis on the Phournoi archipelago, Nirefs Markakis on Kythera, and Olympia Vikatou and Vivian Staikou on the Central Ionian Sea collectively demonstrate that regions with nonlinear coastlines, that is, those characterized by islands, inlets and coves offering concealment, narrow sea passages that forced merchant vessels to travel at reduced speed and alongside predictable sailing routes, as well as heavily trafficked maritime corridors rich in commercial targets, experienced recurring patterns of piracy. Within this framework, the area associated with the notorious Liburnian pirates, discussed by Filip Budić, though far less studied than Cilicia, the Aegean or the Ionian, emerges as a particularly promising field of research, combining topographical suitability with a well-attested pirate tradition.

Fortifications and defensive strategies

Another critical yet ambivalent component in the archaeology of piracy highlighted in several contributions to this volume is the presence of fortifications. While, as Jan Driessen emphasizes, pirates occasionally erected their own defenses, they more typically appropriated existing structures. The tendency to associate well-constructed fortifications with organized polities does not preclude their use by pirates, as the sites of Phalasarna, Antikythera and those in Cilicia demonstrate (Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis; Dawson and Rauh).

Rather, the remains of fortified sites (especially smaller bastions nestled along remote coastlines) underline the multiplicity of functions that defenses could assume, functioning sometimes as bulwarks against piracy and at other times as strongholds for pirate bands themselves, as argued by Konstantinos Pantzouris for the fortified site of Kastraki on Agathonisi. In fact, through his recent archival and field research about the occupation of particular Aegean islands by pirates and corsairs of the 17th century, George Koutzakiotis (2023, this volume) corroborates Driessen's view that pirates themselves typically resorted to makeshift, hastily constructed structures (see also Dawson and Rauh, this volume on the survival of Hellenistic fortifications employing a "vernacular" masonry technique in coastal Rough Cilicia and their potential link to piracy).

Beyond stereotypes: wealth, prosperity and pirate settlements

It is equally essential to challenge entrenched stereotypes that restrict our understanding of piracy and restrain its archaeological study, such as the assumption that pirate settlements were invariably small, impoverished and littoral. As Jan Driessen observes, "the size and prosperity of a coastal settlement do not exclude its role as a potential pirate's nest". Indeed, the presence of exotica and wealth, normally interpreted as evidence of prosperity resulting from commercial exchanges, may, in fact, reflect pirate occupation. This seems particularly plausible at modest coastal settlements, such as Mochlos and Petras in eastern Crete. The presence of luxury goods at these sites suggest that they functioned as pirate hideouts or as safe havens, where pirates could obtain provisions and exchange plunder for foodstuffs.

Adam Dawson and Nicholas Rauh's study of the Cilician pirates further clarifies potential modes of operation through the selection of "occluded sites" by ancient pirate bands. These scholars demonstrate how pirates situated in coastal centers along vulnerable sea-lanes maintained visual contact with seaborne targets indirectly by communicating with lookouts situated at occluded satellite sites in the highland interior. Strategically positioned to observe maritime traffic while remaining invisible from the sea, the inland lookouts potentially delivered early-warning signals to pirate bands waiting along the coast. This pattern, substantiated through systematic surface survey and GIS analysis, is valuable not only for reconstructing evidence of ancient pirate practices, but also for demonstrating the need to incorporate the investigation of interior sites into the archaeology of piracy.

Funerary contexts and mortuary display

A similar interpretative approach applies to funerary contexts. Jan Driessen suggests that the presence of exotica and valuable artifacts, especially when combined with weaponry, in burials such as the Griffin Warrior's tomb at Pylos or the rich grave excavated by Nikolaos Platon on Skopelos might be attributable to successful pirate raids. Panagiotis Gounelas has similarly argued that certain EIA burials, such as Tomb 79 at Lefkandi, may represent instances where wealth, possibly acquired in part through piracy, was manifested through mortuary display. More broadly, in periods of demonstrable or particularly intense levels of pirate activity and in regions topographically suited to such practices, the combination of exotica, prestige goods and weaponry in burial assemblages should at least raise the possibility that the interred person had engaged in piracy.

Piracy in visual arts

Piracy's cultural impact also resonates in the visual arts, despite the tendency of ancient artistic production to focus on elites and to underrepresent the everyday activities of social inferiors. The unnerving impact of pirate activity on the public consciousness all but insured its occasional depiction. Several well-known works ranging from the Flotilla Fresco at Akrotiri, the Siege Rhyton from Mycenae (Driessen; Sakas) and the depiction of Ramses III's naval battle against the Sea Peoples in the Medinet Habu relief in Egypt (Ladas) to the Middle Geometric krater 31.11.2 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Gounelas) and the Late Archaic cup B436 in the British Museum (Manakidou), have all been interpreted as representations of piracy.

Some contributions to this volume suggest that these depictions are potentially more numerous than previously recognized; however, their import has been subsumed under more standard interpretations. For instance, the rock engraving at Korphi tAroniou, that depicts an armed man leading an animal in a boat, more convincingly illustrates animal theft –a timeless pirate practice– than it does livestock transportation (Giagkoudaki). Likewise, Eleni Manakidou has drawn attention to a small group of late red-figure vases and late Panathenaic amphorae depicting Athena or Nike holding the *aphlaston*, namely, the decorated stern of an ancient ship. While most representations of this motif date to the second quarter of the 5th century BCE and are conventionally associated with events during the Persian Wars, most particularly, the naval battle at Salamis, this later group may instead allude to other forms of Athenian maritime success, including naval victories over pirates.

In any event, it should be emphasized that visual sources, much like textual ones, tend to frame piracy through narratives of success. Regardless of whether the artwork depicts victories over pirates or successful pirate raids, specific historical events or broader reflections of maritime supremacy, such representations are consistently articulated from the victor's perspective. Even mythological scenes –most notably the popular story of Dionysus' attempted abduction by Tyrrhenian pirates, examined in detail by Stamatis Fritzilas in this volume– reflect contemporary familiarity with piracy and similar historical realities potentially embedded in myths.

The maritime sphere and underwater archaeology

Turning to the pirates' main sphere of activity –the sea– it seems that, for the moment, its contribution to the archaeology of piracy remains limited. Scholars broadly agree that in both prehistoric times and classical antiquity ships employed for piracy –whether systematic or opportunistic– did not differ substantially from contemporary vessels (see Giagkoudaki on the EBA; Tsonakas on the LBA; Nakas on the Classical and Hellenistic periods). A constant requirement of pirate ships in all eras was speed, maneuverability and stealthiness; nevertheless, it must always be borne in mind that even the humblest craft could be employed for pirate purposes.

Underwater archaeology faces long-recognized difficulties in linking finds directly to piracy (see above), a point also emphasized by George Koutsouflakis in his study of the Phournoi archipelago in the eastern Aegean. Nevertheless, the Kyrenia shipwreck and recent studies on it provide reasons for optimism that careful excavation and systematic study of shipwrecks will illuminate future pirate contexts, as has already been shown with early modern examples (e.g., de Bry 2006; Lizé 2006; de Bry and Roling 2016; Soulat et al. 2023; see also Page and Ewen 2016). To this evidence may now be added shipwreck no. 23 that sank off the modern settlement of Bali in Phournoi. The wreck is dated to the early 19th century and was apparently scuttled after capture and plunder (Koutsouflakis). Furthermore, as the same scholar rightly concludes, combining terrestrial and underwater data holds the potential to reconstruct patterns of pirate activity in regions of particular interest.

Future directions and concluding remarks

The archaeology of piracy in antiquity is progressing with increasing methodical rigor and organization, providing fresh avenues for future research. This view is fully confirmed by George Koutzakiotis' contribution, which effectively “closes the curtain” on this volume by examining piracy and the *corso* in the Aegean during early modern times, a period more accessible archaeologically than is antiquity. Two main categories of material culture relevant to piracy have been identified: (1) remains directly linked to pirate activity and the need to secure ships, loot and personnel; and (2) everyday objects and artifacts. For the first category, geographical context is decisive: such finds occur in locations otherwise inexplicable or uniquely suitable for piracy. For the second, although direct association is difficult to prove, Koutzakiotis reminds us that pirates were embedded in the societies of their time, sharing the same essential needs as their contemporaries.

In general, considering the factors outlined above (such as the importance of topography and the positive correlation between piracy and maritime trade), promising contexts for investigating ancient piracy include regions that display a combination of favorable geomorphology, a pirate tradition and periods of robust maritime trade. The fact that such examples are numerous in Greek seas and across the wider Mediterranean does not diminish the phenomenon, but rather highlights its potential scope and dispersal. When such conditions correspond with additional indicators, like coastal fortifications, “hidden” or “inconvenient” settlements, weapons in ships or burials, or martial imagery displayed in maritime settings, piracy should at least be included among the interpretative possibilities. Furthermore, case studies such as those of Adam Dawson and Nicholas Rauh on Cilicia and Nirefs Markakis on Kythera demonstrate the potential of GIS analyses to the study of ancient piracy. Finally, Jan Driessen’s advice to “focus on time periods during which major state organizations were either absent or weakened” seems particularly useful and is confirmed in nearly every contribution to this volume. As Leonidas Vokotopoulos points out, in times of political and social instability there were always those who perceived turbulence not as a problem but as an opportunity.

CHARTING NEW WATERS: TOWARDS AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY IN ANTIQUITY

Until recently, archaeologists have largely avoided addressing piracy, owing to the methodological and interpretive difficulties involved. Pirates themselves often sought to conceal their activities, while the material culture associated with piracy rarely differed in any substantial way from that of other activities, such as trade or warfare. Nevertheless, piracy was an endemic feature of the ancient Mediterranean world, embedded in everyday life across multiple periods, and at times capable of influencing political, economic and social developments. For this reason, it is incumbent upon archaeological researchers to develop methodologies capable of overcoming these challenges and addressing the phenomenon of piracy, thereby sharing a burden that has hitherto been borne almost exclusively by text-dependent historians. Beyond the chronological limitations inherent to historical research, several studies in this volume –such as Adam Dawson and Nicholas Rauh’s examination of Cilician piracy in the late Hellenistic period and George Koutsouflakis’s work on the Phournoi archipelago in the early modern era– underscore the literary hyperbole about piracy that is frequently encountered in written sources and the consequent need for careful deconstruction. Archaeologists must, therefore, proceed in lock step with historians by addressing dimensions that are otherwise inaccessible to textual analysis, but are capable at the same time of providing an essential means of cross-reference written testimony, regardless of whether that testimony magnifies the scope and intensity of piracy and downplays and obscures it.

The contributions to this volume highlight both the difficulties and the possibilities for the pursuit of the archaeology of piracy and demonstrate that pirates left ambiguous but recognizable traces. Settlements, fortifications, destruction horizons, iconography and funerary assemblages may all reflect pirate activity when subjected to appropriate contextual analysis. Case studies such as those of Aris Tsaravopoulos and Evangelos Kroustalis on the Antikythera shipwreck or Nirefs Markakis on Antidragonera suggest that certain sites and finds may in fact be best understood through the lens of piracy. The most promising directions for future research include closer integration of archaeological and textual evidence, GIS analyses, sustained attention to the role of slaving and ransom markets in shaping maritime economies, and greater focus on the experiences of victims and non-elite actors, who are all too often eclipsed in state-centered narratives.

Above all, we must remember that seafaring identities were fluid: merchants might become pirates and pirates could be turned into merchants or serve as naval auxiliaries. Such multiplicity, highlighted in several contributions to this volume, underscores the complex social realities of maritime life in antiquity and suggests that the archaeology of piracy should avoid one-dimensional approaches. Piracy should not be viewed merely as an instrument of disruption. As Carla Antonaccio has noted (2017, 223), it could also serve as a force of

connectivity and mobility. Viewed in this light, piracy emerges not simply as criminal predation at sea but as a dynamic phenomenon situated at the intersection of commerce, warfare and diplomacy, embedded within networks of marginality, informal exchange and both resistance to and collaboration with established powers.

We may never uncover an archaeological find that can be indisputably associated with ancient piracy. No archaeologist realistically anticipates discovering a ship bearing a pirate flag, a buried treasure chest or a grave with a stele explicitly identifying its occupant as a pirate. The A.P.Pir.A. project sought to transcend the treatment of piracy as a marginal topic or footnote and to re-situate it within archaeological discourse as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon deeply embedded in ancient societies. The contributions assembled in this volume advance precisely this goal: they establish piracy as a legitimate subject of archaeological investigations and invite us to begin reflecting on and engaging with the figure of the ancient pirates. In other words, the journey into the archaeology of piracy in antiquity is still in its infancy...



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Ληστικός or Can We Really Talk of Pirates in the Bronze Age?

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ABSTRACT

The almost honorable regard for sea raiders in Homer contrasts considerably with Thucydides' well-known assertion that Minos freed the seas from piracy, suggesting a major switch in appreciation in the ways foreign goods and slaves were acquired in the Iron Age and how piracy affected state formation. Is Homer's attitude closer to that of the situation in the Bronze Age? Or of one phase of the Bronze Age when raiding was a general custom and a way of life? Apart from synthesizing work by other scholars on pirates and piracy at various moments during the Aegean Bronze Age, I review the nature and location of settlements, representations of naval warfare and raiding, as well as the presence of exotica potentially resulting from what Renfrew called "negative reciprocity" for what these can inform us on the existence of "sea thieves". I also discuss the sites of Pyla-Kokkinokremos and Maa-Palaiokastro on Cyprus and their potential link to piracy or the Sea Peoples in general.

WALKING THE PLANK

The romanticized picture of piracy presented in movies and literature, as we all know, does not agree with reality – pirates were the scourge of the seas and still are, even if the number of pirate attacks is going down (Shane and Magnuson 2016). While most of the Mediterranean is relatively safe nowadays, the Libyan coast has seen an increase of pirate attacks, with ships venturing further away from the coast and threatening passing merchant ships (Robitaille 2020). Other attacks have been noted in the Gulf of Guinea and the Straits of Singapore but, in contrast, Somali piracy is now negligible due to international policing in the Arabian Gulf (Soğancılar 2021; Sandkamp et al. 2022).

The Archaeology of Piracy in Antiquity, the topic of this volume, was already a theme of interest to scholars during WW I (Semple 1916), but I will, for obvious reasons, focus on Bronze Age Crete. There is evidently a problem of anachronistically attributing later connotations, since the island had a bad reputation not only in Hellenistic and early Roman times and in the 9th and 10th centuries CE, when Arabs originally from Spain used it as their base for pirate attacks in the Aegean (Christides 1984), but also later when, despite Venetian and later Ottoman control, it was on the receiving end, being plagued by Barbary pirates (Davis 2017; Dimitropoulos 2022).

Finding material traces of piracy is not an easy task neither for historical, nor for prehistoric times, since pirates do not leave their signature in the destruction levels we encounter. To obtain some kind of starting point, we necessarily must turn to textual evidence and later historical parallels and see if these can help us understand the Bronze Age evidence. As to the first, one cannot avoid noticing the almost honorable regard for sea raiders expressed in Homer, where most of the heroes commit acts of what we today would call piracy almost as a past

time, while busy laying siege at Troy (de Souza 1992). To kill time and to feed their armies, they take their boats and grab whatever they can in the region, women especially. But Homer is also careful *not* to call his heroes pirates (even if Thucydides does), while other, lesser folk and foreigners, are given the label, even if there is no difference between their actions. Strictly speaking, however, and despite the use of the terms *leistes* and *peirates*, one can question whether real piracy is in fact mentioned in the epics, since the term usually implies persons who attack and rob ships *at sea*.

Where the Bronze Age is concerned, we should also ask whether there was a fundamental difference between what we now consider as acts of piracy and those committed by regular warriors or armies. The Mycenae silver siege rhyton, for example, illustrates how one or more ships moored and a city was attacked (Papadopoulos 2019), and a very similar representation is preserved on a stone vase from Epidauros, which, besides a boat scene and a land raid, also includes a drowning person (Koehl 2006, 53, 185, 360, n. 818–19). Pirates or heroes? If a pharaoh has his armies attacking a Levantine city, is this regular warfare, while if one city sends a ship to pillage another city would this be piracy? The distinction is difficult to make and more a matter of appreciation. Many scholars have tried to define piracy (e.g., Samaras 2015, this volume; Emanuel 2018) but, as far as the Aegean Bronze Age is concerned, Homer's uncertainty is probably close to the truth. So, Thucydides (1.1.5) is to be forgiven when claiming that “no disgrace being yet attached to such an achievement, but even some glory”.

AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY

But how can we identify *pirates* and *piracy* in the Aegean Bronze Age. Pirate expert Marcus Rediker (1987, 257–58) already recognized three essential elements that large-scale piracy needed to fulfil: (1) pirates tend to blossom in *anarchic* regions that border *crucial sea lanes*; (2) pirates tend to exploit established *maritime networks* to prey on passing commerce, and (3) since randomly seized cargoes do not always contain foodstuffs essential for survival, pirates need a “nest”, that is, a nearby friendly community where they can trade their plundered cargoes for everyday essentials without consequence and stock up on water. This definition is quite revealing as it comprises several features that may be archaeologically relevant (also Rediker 2004, 2014).

The first is that piracy thrives in *anarchic regions*, as it did in the late 17th century, which should imply that when strong authorities are present, piracy would be limited. It is such a situation already alluded at by Thucydides when stating that King Minos suppressed piracy while installing a sea-based hegemony. Leaving aside whether this was just a way of introducing Athenian naval policy, there are plenty of historical parallels for this: the Barbary pirates were only suppressed when France took control of North Africa in the 1830s, soon after the First Barbary War of 1801–1805 (Martin and Weiss 2019; de Lange 2021), more or less at the same time the US and European nations suppressed it in the Caribbean (Wilson 2021). This criterion would hence imply that we should concentrate on periods *without* a sufficiently strong political force in the Bronze Age Aegean to look for pirate activities. This is not an easy task either, since a strong land-based authority does not always possess a navy to act in tandem. Pharaonic Egypt, for example, only invested into an oceangoing navy during the New Kingdom (Emanuel 2021) and there is literary evidence that Keftiou ships docked at the harbor of *Peru-nefer* (Bietak 2010). The absence of a strong authority after the fall of the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces is often invoked as evidently giving rise to pirate activities during the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and continuing till the Archaic period (esp. Hitchcock and Maier 2018). Whether Crete or some Cretan power actually was responsible for suppressing pirate acts during the heydays of Minoan culture remains, therefore, a possibility. The fact that coastal Cretan cities do not seem to pay special attention to defensive structures could also suggest that the seas were safe and that no attacks were expected from that side, but I will return to this below.

A second important criterion is the existence of *crucial sea lanes through which essential trade* passed (Arnaud 2005; 2020). Sea currents are different in summer and winter, but one assumes that most piracy would take place during the sailing months. 4th century CE Vegetius states that sailing in the Mediterranean was dangerous after

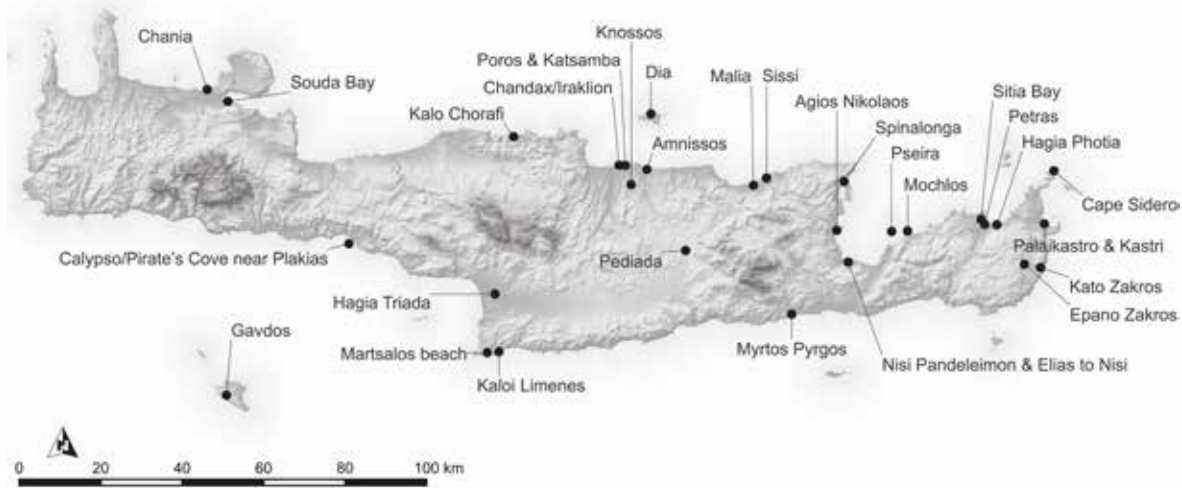


Fig. 1. Map of Crete with places and sites mentioned in the text (map by N. Kress).

September 15 and impossible after November 11 (de Souza 2016; but see Beresford 2013 for a more nuanced view). This said, the south coast of Crete is to be avoided during summer, since the mountains give rise to what are called *katabatic squalls*, a wind that carries high-density air from higher elevations down a slope under the force of gravity (Morton 2001; Gertwagen 2016), which sometimes had hurricane force as the Apostle Paul witnessed before reaching Kaloí Limenes (Spratt 1865, 11–12; Mourtzas and Kolaiti 2021; Curtis 2023 ; Fig. 1). Furthermore, as Cristoforo Buondelmonti already noticed, this coast could only be navigated by crews that knew the topography (Pryor 2006). But even the north coast was often avoided due to the strong meltemi winds, and, during the Crusades, ships going east would prefer to travel from the Ionian Sea close to the Peloponnese and hence through the Cyclades and the Dodecanese, with Crete being avoided (Arnaud 2020). Trading ships would only approach Cretan shores if they were to board one of the major coastal towns, which, in the Bronze Age, would have been Chania, Poros or Amnisos and a few other places along the north coast that offer sufficient shelter, such as Souda Bay, the Spinalonga lagoon or Siteia. The north coast of Crete was, in any case, out of the question during winter because of the fierce winds, and still today there are days, even in summer, when the winds are so strong that even the big ships cannot sail. But with good winds, Egypt could be reached in just four days (Kopanijs 2017, 125).

A third criterion is the existence of a *thriving maritime network*, and Carl Knappett and colleagues (2008; 2011) have extensively published on this. They have concentrated on the main phases of Minoan trade and illustrate changes caused by the disappearance of Santorini-Akrotiri. In general, the links they highlight testify to the dynamism of interaction during the Middle (MBA) and early LBA, but the advanced LBA could do with some more attention despite some initial attempts by Tom Tartaron (2013), Francesco Iacono (2019), and Alex Knodell (2021).

Lastly, pirates need a *free haven*, a place that offers safety but also access to food and fresh water. One may assume that such pirate's nests would reasonably be at some distance from these sea lanes to avoid detection. Where do we need to look and what are we specifically looking for? Small, off-shore islands were probably quite popular – Gavdos, for example, was known as a pirate refuge, even used by Barbarossa as his base one time (Kopaka and Kossyva 1999). The islands of Dia (Vokotopoulos, this volume) and pre-Venetian Spinalonga could be others. Pseira island with its Minoan site would in fact be a good candidate as a pirate settlement. Mochlos too, with its original double harbor hidden by the island itself, could well have been a settlement with a

less than favorable reputation. Sea-caves are also ideal to boat ships, sheltered from storms and views, and Crete has many such caves that are immediately accessible from the sea. Hidden coves (e.g., Calypso or Pirate's Cove near Plakias, or Martsalos beach near the Ayio Farango gorge) and inlets of Crete provided ideal hiding spots for pirates, and the further away from a major coastal settlement that had sufficient authority, the easier it was for freebooters. Small, hidden creeks, such as those at Sissi, used to launch attacks against the Ottomans, that of Ayios Nikolaos or Cape Sidero would have been ideal to hide before preying on passing ships.

Why pirates do what they do is perhaps a redundant question and both Sahlins (1965) and Renfrew (1975) have stressed how piracy is a form of negative reciprocity, an attempt to maximize personal gain from the transaction. Perhaps we could call it also a form of direct access, get things where you can directly, without paying or giving something in exchange. For the Bronze Age, we will never know whether the exotica and wealth in the different settlement or funerary contexts we encounter are the result of pirate activity. The eclectic nature of the Griffin Warrior's assemblage at Pylos (Davis and Stocker 2022, 64, 83–4) does not rule out that this gentleman was occupied with less than honorable activities and the same may be true for other rich, but eclectic Mycenaean tombs in unexpected locations, as that on Skopelos, which, besides a marvelous long sword with gold foil decoration, also yielded a knife with duck's head hilt, a spearhead, dagger and Late Helladic (LH) IIB Ephyraean goblets and alabastra (Platon 1949). I will come back to unusual wealth in otherwise mediocre archaeological contexts below.

Apart from transmittable wealth, the epics and later historical sources inform us that people, and especially women, were sought after by pirates so that they could be sold as slaves. A study by Davis (2003; 2010) found that, between the 16th and 19th centuries, more than a million Europeans were enslaved by Barbary pirates. From the Linear B tablets, we learn of the presence of foreign women in the service of the palace at Pylos (Olsen 2014). Women from Knidos, Lemnos, Miletus and elsewhere were employed by the palace, usually in the textile industry, and other women are explicitly called *rawijaja*, often translated as “captives”, hence announcing a passage in the Iliad where Achilles boasts of the women he captured in the area around Troy (*Il.* 20.193; see also Ergin 2007, 273). Slaves in general are mentioned in the Linear B records, but the references are relatively rare and slaves are always held by individuals, so I would not exaggerate official state acquisitions via piracy. Whether other elements, such as the terracotta spools used in textile production (Fig. 2) that show up regularly in Late Minoan (LM) and LH IIIA–C contexts, suggest the presence of foreign women, seems a reasonable suggestion (Driessen and Gaignerot-Driessen 2023), but we are unable to tell whether these women formed part of a larger population movement or whether they were captives, acquired during raids or bought in slave markets from pirates. The oddity is that the prizes given at the Homeric funeral games –tripod basins and kraters, gold, horses, cattle, and women– are probably also those that were most prized by pirates. It is probably not a coincidence that Achilles brings out these prizes *from his ships!* (*Il.* 23.259; see especially Ready 2007).

We even have less evidence when it comes to material traces of acts of piracy. That such things –attacking and robbing ships at sea– were happening in the Bronze Age, is alluded at by the reference to Lukka pirates or *Misi* in the Amarna letters (Emanuel 2020), and seems to be suggested by the scene on the north wall of the Flotilla Fresco of Akrotiri, Thera (Morgan 1988). This shows two main events: a seascene, usually dubbed the shipwreck scene, and a raid on land (Fig. 3). The first scene shows a captain with an outstretched arm and at least three nude people with a different hairstyle, drowning in front of his boat, and with them are floating shields and shepherd sticks, suggesting they may have been warriors. The nature of this scene is quite different from that on the opposite wall. Are these the ancestors of the Barbary pirates? Unfortunately, the scene is fragmentary so we cannot judge the nature of the ships involved nor whether the two partly preserved ships were manned by a crew similar to the drowning people. The second scene, the land raid, is immediately above this, so some connection can be assumed. Here, eight shield and spear carrying warriors with boar tusk helmets are heading inland and up the hill, where a dozen cattle are assembled, presumably to be taken away. The warriors are probably the “good guys” but they are involved in what we may perhaps assume is piracy raiding. We can hypothesize that there is a general connection between these scenes and that a mixture of sea and land raids is hence suggested. The flotilla scene in general and the many depictions of ships in Aegean and non-Aegean iconography



Fig. 2. Abandonment deposit at Sissi comprising clay spools (photo by F. Gaignerot).

(e.g., Papadopoulos 2009; Emanuel 2021, 311–43; for ship typology, see Van de Moortel 2017) show that at least the means and techniques of naval warfare were available, and this from an early moment onwards.

Can we add some other archaeological indicators?

Coastal cities with *important defensive structures* can evidently be interpreted in different ways: either as a protective measure against pirates or pirates protecting themselves against potential people wanting revenge. On Crete, however, coastal sites with defensive infrastructure are relatively rare. Ayia Photia near Siteia could be a case in point (Middle Minoan [MM] IA; Tsiropoulou 1988) while both the sites of Petras (MM IIA; Tsiropoulou 2012, 55 fig. 9) and Sissi (Jusseret 2011, 173–76) were given megalithic walls at some parts of the settlement. Myrtos Pyrgos also had a defensive wall, looking out towards the inland, however (MM IIB; Cadogan 2013).

Although there are a few historical parallels for pirates constructing themselves serious defenses (like Tortuga, Bosch 2016), often they take over existing sites that may have been fortified by the first inhabitants (such as Île Sainte Marie on Madagascar, a French port later occupied by pirates, or Port Royal in the Caribbean, only turned into a fortress after the pirates had been chased). Pirates are in fact not so keen in spending much of their time and energy into communal work. The size and prosperity of a coastal settlement do not exclude its role as a potential pirate's nest. Marsa Matruh, to the very west of Egypt, is sometimes called an Egyptian trade post, sometimes a pirate's nest (Emanuel 2016, 267). We should also not forget that Chandax –present-day Herakleion– was the main pirate city of the Aegean during the 9th and 10th centuries CE, when it was in the hands of Arab Moors coming from Spain till Nikephoros Phokas defeated them in 961 (Christides 1984). It was these Moors who had protected the city with a deep ditch, hence its name *El Khandak*, and a rampart made of earth mixed with goat and pig hair (Talbot and Sullivan 2005, 64). In this case, there is ample literary evidence of course.

Several scholars, including Hitchcock and Maeir (2014; 2018), and following Nowicki (2000; 2001), have argued that the collapse of Aegean palace administrations during the advanced LBA opened the way for pirate



Fig. 3. Drawing of the Shipwreck scene in the miniature fresco of the West House at Akrotiri, Thera (drawing by the author).

attacks throughout the Aegean, and, especially in Crete. Following Thucydides (1.1.7: “But the old towns, on account of the great prevalence of piracy, were built away from the sea.”, trans. J.M. Dent, London and New York, 1910), this would have provoked the *abandonment* of coastal areas. Excavations at Sissi and Malia illustrate this phenomenon during LM IIIB (Driessen and Gaignerot-Driessen 2023). In both sites, rooms were simply left with their objects in place – only metals were missing (Fig. 2). Were these pillaged or simply taken along by the original occupants when they left? Apart from piracy, the abandonment of regions can evidently also have other causes: natural disasters, epidemics (malaria), environmental change (aridity) etc. (already Cameron 1991; Nelson and Hegmon 2001). Hence, blaming pirates should be based on an in-depth contextual analysis. There are, however, plenty of historical parallels for such a causal relation, including early Modern Italy that suffered from Barbary pirates (Davis 2003).

A link between piracy and the location of settlements inland is usually inferred to explain the presence of sites far from the coast, especially in the Cyclades, as for example the city of Xobourgo on Tenos (Kourou 2001; Dimitropoulos 2022). Diodorus Siculus (5.6.2) also mentions that the Sicani built their settlements on strong inland hilltops in fear of pirates. Also in East Crete, modern inland settlements such as those of Palaikastro and Epáno Zakros have been explained as forced displacement following piracy attacks by North African raiders. Rackham and Moody (1996, 198), for example, have dubbed the far east “corsair country”, because it suffered so frequently from pirate attacks. This would then lead to a *contrasting* synchronous settlement distribution pattern with (1) perhaps only a few defensible settlements with a sizeable population left on the coast, strong enough to face pirate attacks, (2) an occasional pirate’s nest in a more hidden location to avoid detection (as e.g., on Kastri hill at Palaikastro) and (3) a more general presence of smaller, inland settlements, at a safe distance from the coast. Enduring coastal settlements such as Chania may have resisted and represent the first category of sites. Pirate nests may have been located in the different bays east of Nisi Panteleimon, the promontory below Vrokastro, and one of these –Elias to Nisi– was defended by a strong wall (Hayden 2001; Vokotopoulos, this volume). Its date, however, is not entirely clear.

Location and isolation may be important criteria to judge the nature of a settlement, but even this criterium should be properly contextualized. The site of Kalo Chorafi, for example, excavated under the direction of Anastasia Tzigounaki, is located in the middle of nowhere, in a small valley in what is otherwise an extremely rocky coast between Herakleion and Rethymnon (Tzigounaki and Karnava 2020). The site would hence be an ideal candidate for a pirate lair if it wasn’t that this coastal settlement seemingly forms just one of a chain of

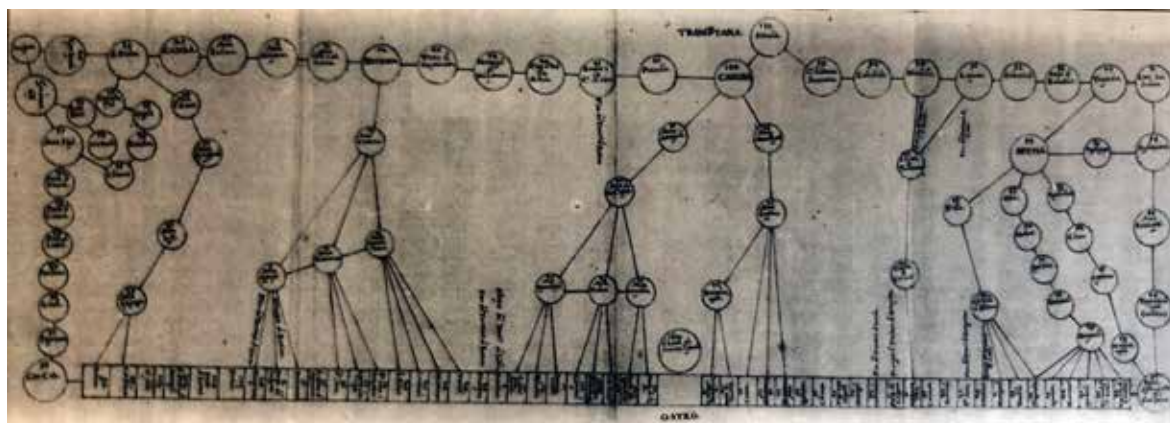


Fig. 4. Venetian map drawn by Nicola Gualdo de Priorati in 1633 showing network of lookouts (after Arakadaki 1997, fig. 1).

coastal sites in the Bronze Age (Tzigounaki and Karnava 2020, fig. 2). This could then suggest that the site's function was exactly the opposite – to patrol and protect the coast and prevent piracy.

Captain Spratt in the 1860s describes the presence of guard posts or look-outs “*upon the most conspicuous eminences along the whole coast of Crete, at distances of eight or ten miles apart, whose beacon-fires blaze up at dusk, if a vessel comes in sight, in order to warn the neighbouring villages authorities that a strange sail is off the coast. It is doubtless a custom handed down from the earliest times, especially when piracy was frequent*” (Spratt 1865, 3). A similar system was recently described by Andrew Blackler (2022) and a series of *soroi*, beacons or pyres, have been identified in the Pediada of Crete. These could have been used for signaling and alerting in case of attacks (Sarris et al. 2011; Panagiotaki et al. 2020). Steven Soetens (2005, 44) too has noted the similarities between the various lookouts as shown on a Venetian map (Fig. 4) drawn by Nicola Gualdo de Priorati in 1633 and the location of peak sanctuaries (Arakadaki 1997). Could these, besides their ritual functions, also have represented an early warning system, protecting the Cretan coasts during the heydays of Minoan civilization? A combination of evenly spaced coastal settlements, peak sanctuaries with large vistas and beacons that could be used in a way that tradition suggests the fall of Troy was announced would have represented a considerable “AWACS”.

And then there is the question of pirate attacks of coastal settlements – as I said they don't leave their signature and thus it is difficult to blame pirates rather than another adversary for the destruction and pillaging of a settlement. A much-cited example is the Late Cycladic (LC) IIIC site of Koukounaries on Paros. Because of the discovery of bodies within the destruction layer, its excavator, Dimitrios Schilardi (1979; 1984), blamed pirates, but apparently the site was not pillaged, which would be strange in case of a pirate attack (Vlachopoulos 2003). Each site in fact should be explored in detail: How did the destruction happen? Was it partial or complete? Pirates would, I think, rarely destroy a site entirely since it would be to their benefit if the settlement recovered so that it could be pillaged again. Bergen in Norway, for example, was pillaged by pirates in 1428, 1429 and 1432 and although partly burned, enough was left to allow recovery (Stylegar et al. 2020).

If a site was pillaged, can we identify its objects elsewhere? Or objects from one culture in another area, without these being the result of trade? Or is there a concentration of unexplained wealth in modest coastal settlements, like, for example, at Mochlos or even Petras? Such finds do not necessarily imply that these sites themselves were pirate nests, but they may have provided safe havens for pirates to stock up and exchange valuables for foodstuffs.

A case in point could be the palace of Knossos, the destruction of which in LM IIIA2 remains a historical problem. Was this the result of internal strife, an attack by a Mainland competitor, or could it have been raided by pirates? Undefended as it is, the palace lies only an hour's walk from the shore, a little more than 5 km. We may also ask whether Knossos, as Athens, Rome and so many important other cities, was located inland with

such a pirate threat in mind, already in the Neolithic? Pirates tend not to venture more than between 2 and 10 km inland so as not to jeopardize an eventual retreat, although exceptions occur (Kaiser and Calafat 2014). Whether Knossos ever was accessible by small boats through the Kairatos river from Katsambas is unlikely; thus attackers probably came on foot. Moreover, the site was hidden from the sea by the Zafer Papoura hill (Roberts 1979), but a well-organized group could have attacked, plundered, and burned the palace in part, leaving only Linear B tablets and pottery behind (Driessen forthcoming). Since there is only little evidence for looted material on Crete itself in late LM IIIA2 and IIIB, this may have ended up in some other region of the Mediterranean. In any case, Knossos palace was burnt and nothing of value was left inside, as the quotations of passages in the first report on the excavation by Arthur Evans below suggest, a situation that considerably contrasts with the earlier destruction of the palace at Kato Zakros or the Villa Reale at Ayia Triada:

- “The care with which the rooms seem to have been searched for metal objects at the time of the destruction of the Palace no doubt accounts for the rarity of such among the finds.” (Evans 1900, 66).
- “The rooms of the Palace, as already noted, had evidently been ransacked for metal objects at the time of its destruction.” (Evans 1900, 68).
- “The comparative absence of clay vessels in the chambers is itself a negative indication that vases of precious metals were largely in use here. The search for valuables of this class, probably often renewed in the period immediately succeeding the destruction of the Palace, sufficiently accounts for a good deal of disorder visible in some of the rooms. The chests containing documents seem in most cases to have been broken open and the tablets thrown about on the floor. Many beautiful stone vases had been smashed, but these did not tempt the cupidity of a barbaric race of plunderers.” (Evans 1900, 68).
- “The fact that these objects in nearly all cases rested on the floor level is itself an almost conclusive proof that what disturbance took place occurred for the most part at the time of the destruction, perhaps even before the final burning of the Palace.” (Evans 1900, 69).

PYLA-KOKKINOKREMOS – A PIRATE’S NEST?

This brings me to my final point: can we explain the presence of considerable wealth, especially with varying ethnic origins, that shows up in modest settlements, as being booty, acquired during pirate raids or as settlements that acted as free havens for pirates? Again, Mochlos and Pseira may represent examples of such sites in view of the rich finds made there, but here special attention is given only to the site of Pyla-Kokkinokremos on Cyprus and the results of the new excavations (Bretschneider et al. 2023; Driessen et al. 2023). It is a site which, since its initial excavation, has been connected to the Sea Peoples (for a discussion with references see Georgiou 2012), a group also often assumed to have been involved in pirate activities because of the mention in Ugaritic texts that “they lived on ships” (Hitchcock and Maeir 2014; 2018). Hitchcock and Maeir (2018) see Maa-Palaiokastro on the west coast of Cyprus as a pirate settlement largely due to its location on a defended peninsula and the fact that it was occupied for less than a generation. Can Pyla-Kokkinokremos also be considered as one?

Both Maa and Pyla are short-lived settlements, suddenly abandoned, although Maa somewhat later than Pyla, in Late Cypriot (LCyp) IIIA rather than LCyp IIC. In the case of Pyla, its now silted-up harbor was in fact an inland lagoon and hence its ships could well have been hidden from passing boats (Brown 2013, with references). At the same time, Pyla is close to land and sea-routes and within a day’s sailing of the rich coasts of Lebanon and Syria. If we look at the lay-out of the Pyla settlement, there are some additional features which render a hypothesis that it was some kind of pirate settlement feasible or attractive (Fig. 5). It is enclosed by a perimeter wall with projecting bastions and only a few access gates on top of a 65 m hill with steep sides.

Not only is the architecture on the site very homogenous, with all dwellings quite similar in plan, size, and construction (at least as far as present evidence allows us to recognize), but wealthy objects were found



Fig. 5. Plan of the settlement of Pyla-Kokkinokremos on Cyprus (map by N. Kress).

throughout the site, i.e., they are not limited to a few contexts only. Every house excavated comprises fine stone vases, metal objects, outstanding decorated pots, and jewelry of all kinds. This seems to suggest a high degree of social homogeneity between its occupants as we would perhaps expect from a pirate settlement. Since pirate

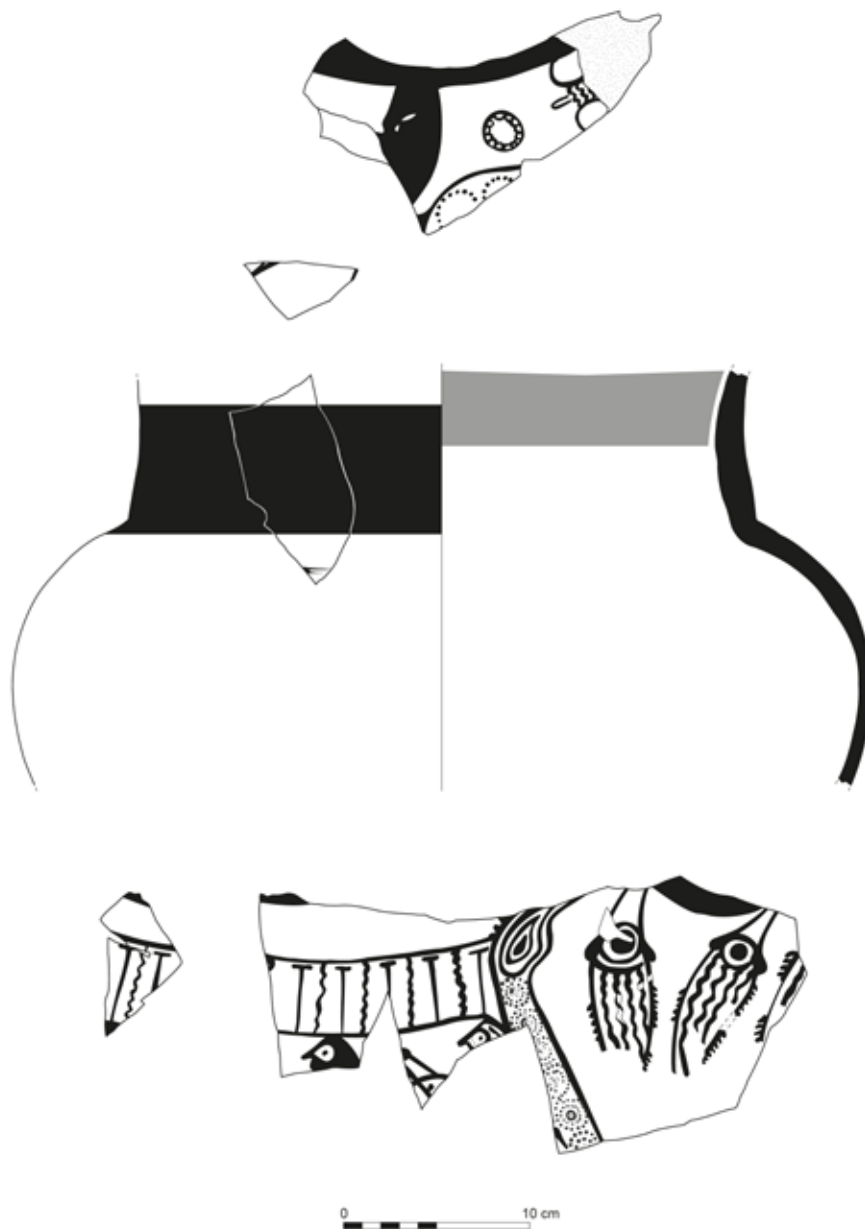


Fig. 6. Fragments of a ship krater from Sector 3 at Pyla (after Kostopoulou and Jung 2023, 6.3.11).

nests are often evoked as places of liberty and great equality, especially by anarchist writers, occupied by those who don't want to be governed (Wilson 2004; Scott 2009), Pyla's settlement organization fits the picture. Many of the objects –precious or not– originate from various non-Cypriot regions, such as Egypt, the Levant, the Aegean (Crete and Argolis), Anatolia or Sardinia. Are these simply the result of trade as Cyprus at the time – LCyp IIC or around 1200 BCE– has several sites that show foreign exotica, including Enkomi and Hala Sultan Tekke (Fischer 2023)? Or is this booty acquired –directly or indirectly– from close or far away cities? The hidden wealth that is encountered as hoards (Driessen et al. 2023) likewise could suggest that these were some kind of piggy banks created by the potential pirate occupants of the site. And perhaps their love for weapons and warlike representations on kraters and rhyta (see e.g., Bretschneider et al. 2023, figures 3.53, 3.54, 4.33, 4.64, 4.72, 5.24, 5.61, 5.66, 6.3.8) can be used as circumstantial evidence. Here especially a fragmented ship krater, probably an Argolic import, is especially relevant (Kostopoulou and Jung 2023, fig. 6.3.11; Fig. 6).

Both *Maa-Palaiokastro* and *Pyla-Kokkinokremos* belong to a period during which the Sea Peoples were active, and both sites have by times seen as their settlements. The Sea Peoples themselves are often seen as the first organized, major pirate coalition of the ancient Mediterranean, which, considering how they are mentioned in ancient texts, seems to correspond to what we assume pirates were doing: attacking coastal cities and wreaking chaos and mayhem. Jung (2009) already suggested that some European-type weaponry and other features connected to these Sea Peoples could have been brought by warriors from the Western Mediterranean, becoming “Pirates of the Aegean”. Were they the ones who manned the big brother of the Gurob Ship model, sometimes dubbed a Mycenaean pirate ship (Wachsmann 2013)?

POSTSCRIPT

Most of what I have mentioned in this paper remains, I am aware, highly speculative. While Bronze Age pirates remain highly elusive, this should rather present a challenge than an obstacle and invite to more detailed contextual analyses. At the same time, the best guarantee for success should be to focus on time periods during which major state organizations were either absent or weakened, as in the Early Bronze Age (e.g., Yeagley 2022; Angelopoulou, this volume; Giagkoudaki, this volume) or, as is mostly the case, the advanced LBA (e.g., Samaras 2015). In their book “Pieces of Eight: More Archaeology of Piracy”, Ewen and Skowronek (2016, 279) seek to answer whether it is possible to determine piratical behavior from recovered artifacts, deciding eventually that “the Golden Age of Piracy [in the 17th century Caribbean] may have been too short to leave a fully developed pirate culture that is clearly recognizable in the archaeological record”, and this despite the length of the period. This remark should also warn us from overinterpreting our evidence.

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Investigating the Origins of Piracy in the Aegean

Trade and Maritime Raids during the Early Bronze Age

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ABSTRACT

During the Early Bronze Age II, the presence of imported raw materials, artifacts and technologies reveals an active exchange system and widespread maritime networks in the Aegean. Overseas contacts and the accumulation of wealth as the result of those practices changed the dynamics of society. Opportunities for economic benefits and social promotion became available, intensifying competition between those involved in maritime networks. The accumulation of wealth in the Aegean is usually interpreted as the result of intensive trade and gift exchange. At the same time, however, some scholars have argued that the distribution of exotic or valuable objects and raw materials may also have been the result of raiding, thus dating the origins of piracy to the Early Bronze Age II period. Other scholars dispute this view, arguing that there are fundamental differences that distinguish trade from raiding and warfare, and there can be no question of piracy in such an early period, while others accept the existence of piracy but claim that, in the absence of written sources, such activities cannot be documented, as their archaeological signature is weak.

This paper examines the possibility of the existence of piracy in the Early Bronze Age Aegean. For this purpose, the differences between piracy and war are discussed, and evidence of material culture possibly related to the phenomenon of piracy (e.g., ship technology and iconography, material culture and its use, settlement patterns and settlement features) are examined. It is argued that in such early societies there were no absolute distinctions between activities like trade, piracy, raids and war, and that these activities cannot be approached in a modern way of thinking. The evidence in the material culture may be indirect, but seems to suggest that piracy could have been practiced in the Early Bronze Age Aegean by the same people who participated in maritime trade and other “legal” activities.

INTRODUCTION

The Early Bronze Age (EBA) II is characterized by a burgeoning interaction in the wider Aegean region, often called “international spirit”. This phenomenon is evidenced in the intensification of maritime activity, the increase in trade and exchanges, the widespread distribution of common traits of material culture across the Aegean and the movement of raw materials, objects and technical knowledge, mostly of Cycladic origin or influence, while towards the end of the period large-scale contacts were established between the Cyclades and Mainland Greece with the eastern Aegean and Asia Minor (e.g., Renfrew 1972, 451; Broodbank 2000, 279–83). Most scholars agree that the pursuit and exploitation of new metals sources led to an expansion of pre-existing networks of interaction, the archaeological evidence of which, apart from the presence of tin bronze in the

Aegean, can be seen in a new group of drinking and serving vessels with oriental characteristics (e.g., Şahoğlu 2005, 339; Day et al. 2009, 335–37; Kouka 2014, 43–4).

These maritime activities provided opportunities for wealth accumulation, which could be acquired either by trading or raiding. The quite large number of fortified settlements and the destruction layers found in some of them, the presence of weapons in settlement or burial contexts and the iconography of the period that includes ships and daggers, have led many scholars to accept the important role of raids in the EBA Aegean (e.g., Agouridis 1997, 20; Broodbank 2000, 253; Sherratt 2000, 135; Angelopoulou 2016–2017, 139–42).

On the basis of the high maritime activity of the period and the positive correlation between trade and piracy (see Samaras, this volume), this paper discusses the possible nature of the raids in the EBA Aegean and attempts to investigate elements that may relate to the phenomenon of piracy during that period. Initially, different views on piracy in the Aegean during the EBA are presented and discussed. Then, the motives of pirate activity are explored, as derived from the possible perceptions, the iconography and the archaeological evidence. Several aspects of the material culture of the EBA Aegean, e.g., the use of some objects and their symbolisms, the changes in settlement patterns and the existence of settlements with strong defensive systems, offer indications of potential pirate activities conducted by certain island communities.

VIEWS ON PIRACY IN THE EBA AEGEAN

Wealth accumulation in the Aegean was traditionally considered to be the result of intensive trade and/or gift exchange (e.g., Cherry 1981, 41–68; Cosmopoulos 1991, 155–67; Halstead and O’Shea 1992), so any influences or innovations observed in material culture were explained as a result of peaceful exchanges, while interpretations concerning the transfer of materials, people and technical knowledge by raiding or looting were only tentative or simply absent. At the same time, relevant studies have tended to emphasize the risks of sea travel, which were mainly attributed to weather conditions and the small capacity of ships of this period (e.g., Agouridis 1997, 2–6; Broodbank 2000, 92–6), while the dangers from human hostile activity were underestimated, if not omitted, resulting in a somewhat one-sided approach to a complex phenomenon.

Nevertheless, a small number of scholars has occasionally supported the possibility of pirate activity in the EBA Aegean. Renfrew (1972, 440, 763) was probably the first to date the origins of piracy in the Aegean to the EBA II, based on Thucydides’ claims (1.4.1) about unsafe navigation before the time of Minos due to pirates and taking into account archaeological data, such as fortified settlements and the circulation of precious metals in the Aegean. Renfrew’s opinion was accepted by Doumas (1988, 27–9) to explain the destruction at the end of the Early Cycladic (EC) IIA in the northeastern Aegean and Asia Minor, and the east Aegean influences on the material culture of the EBA IIB Aegean. He argued that “refugees-pirates”, following the familiar trade routes, settled in major trading sites of the previous period, but also established new ones at key-points. This way, he links trade with the conflicts and destruction that took place during this period and relates them to possible pirate incidents. More recently new arguments have been added to the debate about the changes in the Aegean during this period, adopting somewhat different interpretation and arguing that, beyond the movements of people actively involved in sea trade, the spread of ideas, technical knowledge and objects may also be due to conflicts and possible pirate activities (Yeagley 2022). Also, as discussed in more detail below, longboats of the period have been suggested to be linked to piracy (Tzovaras 2020, 17).

On the other hand, several scholars have presented counter-arguments to the above views that either have to do with the existence of piracy in such an early period or with the (in)ability of the research to detect this phenomenon. For example, Agouridis (1997, 20) argues that the archaeological footprint of piracy is similar to that of trade, so no distinction can be made between these two activities. According to de Souza (1999, 2, 15), in periods without written sources piracy cannot be documented, as it leaves no archaeological footprint. Moreover, it should be mentioned that Broodbank (2000, 410) denies the existence of piracy in the EBA Aegean,

not because he is opposed to the idea of raiding during this period, but on the basis of the view that piracy is an illegal activity, so in order to exist in any place and time, there must be recognized laws and rules for sea travel. Given the fact that it is very much unlikely that such recognized laws and rules for sea travel existed in the EBA Aegean, essentially all that applied was the sea-law of the most powerful islanders.

RAIDS IN THE AEGEAN: PIRACY OR WAR?

Despite the varying views in the debate on piracy, it seems generally accepted that maritime raids were conducted in the EBA Aegean, so what should be investigated is the exact nature and purpose of these raids. Broodbank's objection to the recognition of these raids as pirate activities is mainly based on researchers attempting to characterize the distant past using modern terms, perceptions and considerations. Indeed, in the EBA Aegean there were no recognized rules equivalent to today's maritime laws and therefore the legality or the illegality of an action was not perceived in the same way. However, the A.P.Pir.A. project's research about the history of piracy reveals that pirates rarely described their activities as piracy and usually used arguments to "justify" and "legalize" them. Also, it was very common for an action to be characterized as piracy in order to justify the pursuit and punishment of certain people, regardless of whether they were really pirates or not and regardless of the existence (or lack of) laws (see more in Samaras, this volume). Therefore, for a more secure approach and understanding of the phenomenon of piracy, it seems that the characterization of an act as piracy should be based on the examination of its objective parameters (such as, for example, means and motives) rather than on how it was perceived and characterized by the people involved (perpetrators or victims) or whether there were any recognized laws about maritime activity.

Therefore, it seems necessary to investigate the nature of the maritime raids in the Aegean Sea and whether these raids can be classified as piracy or be included in the scope of war, as it is undeniable that every war has an economic-pillaging dimension, both in terms of motives (i.e., to boost the economy of a community or a group) and in terms of results, as it is customary for the victors to pillage the losers. The boundaries between war and piracy are often blurred, but an analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this study (see Samaras, this volume).

However, as far as the EBA Cyclades are concerned, on which this paper focuses, based on the general characteristics of the period and the size and organization of its communities, it seems that the conflicts were not large-scale organized acts with campaigns and sieges. Warfare using ships requires manpower and complex social organization, and it is very costly, as many ships, weapons and people –all limited in number in the Cyclades during the 3rd millennium BCE (Broodbank 1989, 321, 333; 2000, 86–7)– would have had to be used.

Moreover, since, with the exception of a few large settlements, the small communities of the EBA Cyclades do not seem to have had a complex social and political organization, it is difficult to argue that the raids carried out were organized and systematic and aimed at permanent results, such as the annexation of a territory or the destruction of an economic rival. On the contrary, it is more likely that they were of small scale, carried out on an occasional and perhaps opportunistic basis and were primarily motivated by the economic benefit of those taking part in them. Therefore, and despite the aforementioned difficulties in distinguishing between piracy and warfare, maritime raids in the EBA Cyclades seem to have been much closer to the characteristics of the former than the latter.

It should be also noted that the motive for a pirate raid may not have been only economic but also socio-political. The leaders of a community, by conducting a raid and risking themselves because of their participation in such a dangerous action, which brought benefits to all community members, gained prestige and confirmed and legitimized their social status within their own community. Considering the means of the period, the EBA sea voyages were in themselves "heroic" acts, as one had to face the dangers caused by both sea and weather conditions during travel and the resistance of the people under attack; an act could be even more "heroic", when the participants fought and the raiders returned with booty for the community.

Therefore, it should be considered what these benefits were, both individually and collectively, i.e., how was the community benefitting by risking the survival of its population by choosing to expose people to the dangers of the high seas and raids? Before these motives can be explored, however, the means of navigation of the period and whether they were suitable for raiding should be examined.

SHIP TECHNOLOGY

The information available on the EBA ships is limited and indirect, as it comes almost exclusively from the iconography and not from the ships themselves (for the Early Helladic II shipwreck on the islet of Dokos in the Argosaronic Gulf, see Papathanasopoulos 2003; Vichos 2003). Ship depictions appeared as early as the Final Neolithic (FN) period, as can be seen from the rock-engravings at Strophilas on Andros (Televantou 2009, 128, 137, 139, pls. 86, 88, 96a; 2018a, 390–5, fig. 40.10) and then in the beginning of EBA at Vathy on Astypalaia (Vlachopoulos 2021, 106–9). Many ship representations have been found at these two sites, with some of them decorating the main entrances of the above fortified settlements, revealing the importance of ships for these communities. During the EBA II period, ship depictions are known mainly from frying pans, most of which have been found at the Chalandriani cemetery on Syros (Tsountas 1899, 90–2, figs. 16–22; Marthari 2010, 116), and from rock-engravings found at Plaka on Andros (Televantou 2006, 12–14; 2018b, 58, fig. 14b), Chalandriani and Kastri on Syros (Marthari 2015, 303, 307, fig. 2, pl. 3; 2019, 239, fig. 6), and Korphi t'Aroniou on Naxos (Doumas 1965, 49, 53, pls. 4, 7; see also Legaki 2016 for a discussion on the interpretations of the EC rock-engravings).

Thanks to the above depictions, two ship types are identified, all paddled crafts, without masts or sails. The first ship type is the one depicted in most rock-engravings and has an almost semi-circular hull and unevenly raised foresides, which makes it suitable for the transport of goods (cargo boat) (Tzouvaras 2020, 9–11). The second type is depicted in the frying pans and has an elongated, narrow, hydrodynamic shape and an angular hull (longboat) (Basch 1991, 46–7; Tzouvaras 1995). The ships depicted in the rock-engravings from Korphi t'Aroniou fall into the same category because of the shape of the hull (Tzouvaras 2020, 6–7), but are likely to be of smaller size, since only two oars are depicted (Broodbank 1989, 332).

Longboats had slender hulls and shallow draught, which made them unstable. In addition, their technological characteristics and the fact that they carried at least twenty-five people meant that there was limited free space. It seems, therefore, that these ships were unsuitable for the transport of large volumes of goods (Broodbank 1989, 332–33, 336; Tzouvaras 2020, 12–4). Thus, in cases of large cargoes, it was more appropriate to transport them mainly by cargo boats, which were built for that purpose.

Based on the above features and ethnographic parallels concerning the use of canoes with many oars, Broodbank (1989, 336) concluded that the initiatory use of longboats was not intended for trade but for raids (see also Tzouvaras 2020, 17). Moreover, due to the large number of rowers and the risks of a sea voyage, he argued that such raids could only be conducted by large, prosperous and self-sufficient communities, which in the Cyclades were extremely few, no more than seven or eight, according to his estimates (Broodbank 2000, 211–23). On the contrary, the numerous small Cycladic communities either could not carry out such raids, or they banded together under the leadership and guidance of the larger ones. On their own, all they could do was undertake small-scale sea voyages of short distances, using small ships with a crew of no more than two or three people, as can be seen in the rock-engravings from Korphi t'Aroniou.

Raids were carried out either from ship to ship or from ship to settlement. Ship-to-ship raids were probably easier, as a single ship with two or three rowers, loaded with goods was an easy target for a longboat with twenty-five people. Consequently, ship-to-ship raids were probably more frequent, but there were also ship-to-settlement attacks despite the objective difficulties. The fatigue of a voyage followed by an attack, as well as the supervision of sea passages from coastal settlements would have made it difficult for the attackers to land the ship, disembark and attack a settlement, whose inhabitants were of a greater number. However, these

actions were based on ambush, so fewer people would be required to raid a settlement, damage it and leave with spoils. Moreover, the existence of coastal fortified settlements, the layers of destruction and the weapons found in them, including sea pebbles used as slingshot projectiles (Angelopoulou 2016–2017, 139–41), lead us to conclude that ship-to-settlement attacks probably took place.

In conclusion, during the FN and EBA I, when sea voyages are increasing (Papadatos and Tomkins 2013, 355, 374), cargo boats appear to serve the trading needs and are likely to continue to be used in the following period for the same purpose. As mentioned above, during the EBA II, maritime contacts intensified, causing an increase in wealth in the Aegean, which acted as an attraction and could be acquired either by trading or raiding. Since trade acts as a motive force for raiding, the emergence of the longboat in the period of trade intensification is unlikely to be coincidental. During this period, the need for the construction of a new light, maneuverable and fast ship suitable for raids seems to have arisen. In diachronic perspective, speed and maneuverability are the essential features of all pirate ships (e.g., see Nakas, this volume about the pirate ships in the Classical and Hellenistic periods).

MOTIVES FOR PIRACY

Since conditions and ships appropriate for pirate raids existed during the EBA, the question of the motives for these raids inevitably arises. According to anthropological studies (e.g., Torres-Rouff and Costa Junqueira 2006, 60; Erdal and Erdal 2012, 78), social stress, resource constraints, and ecological problems (for example, droughts and population decline), may lead to violent behavior such as raiding and looting. In the case of piracy in the EBA Aegean, on which this paper is focused, the most obvious motive was the acquisition of valuable objects and raw materials and as has already been mentioned, the enhanced social status of those who brought them through such a “heroic” act. However, equally (or even more) valuable spoils may have been animals and people, as they were necessary for the survival of a community, the former as a means of food and production, the latter as a means of strengthening the human resource and reproduction through exogamy (Broodbank 2000, 86; Sherratt 2000, 135).

In one of the rock-engravings from the Korphi t’Aroniou, for which it has been suggested that they date back to the end of EC II or the beginning of EC III, an armed man leading an animal in a boat is depicted (Doumas 1965, 48–50; Fig. 1). Animals in ships are also represented in rock-engravings at Strophilas on Andros, which date to the FN period (Televantou 2008, 47; 2009, 128; Fig. 2). These depictions are usually interpreted as the movement of animals to smaller islands for grazing and/or breeding (Broodbank 1989, 332–33; 2000, 127–28; see also Cherry 1985, 20), a practice still in use today in the Aegean (e.g., Chaniotis 1999, 191; Marketou 2023, 45).

However, it should not be omitted that animals have always been included in pirate spoils and generally bandit raids. At least in the case of the rock-engraving of Korphi t’Aroniou, the animal snatching seems to be the most convincing interpretation (Sherratt 2000, 135), firstly because the man who leads the animal to the ship is armed, which could be interpreted as either defensive or offensive, and secondly because the above practice confirms martial skills and brings social prestige, especially in societies that are accustomed to robbery and piracy. Such scenes could therefore be depicted as a reminder of heroic achievements, like later hunting scenes. The movement of flocks for grazing and/or breeding is an undeniable practice, but it is part of everyday activities, which are essential and necessary for survival, but do not carry the same social prestige and therefore are less frequently depicted.

Similarly, it should be considered that over time the most valuable pirate booty might have been people. The history of piracy reveals that the most common motives for the capture of persons were in obtaining ransom for their release and enslavement for exploitation or sale. These two motives are extremely difficult to decipher in the EBA Cyclades, but the possibility of the abduction of women for reproduction cannot be excluded (Sherratt

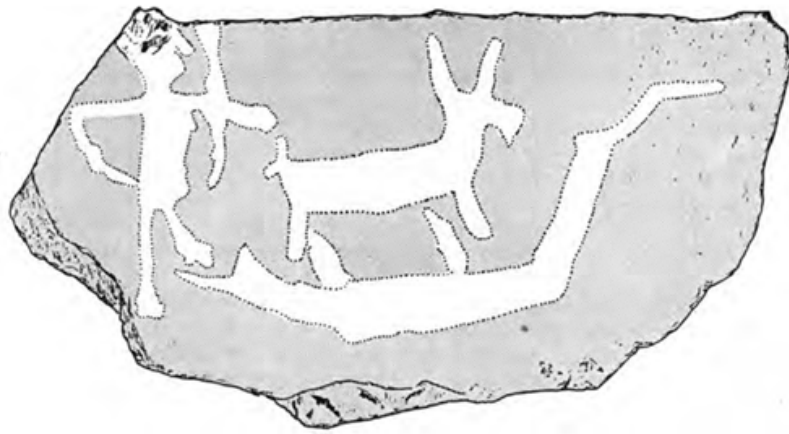


Fig. 1. Rock-engraving from Korphi t'Aroniou with an armed man leading an animal to a boat (Doumas 1965, fig. 4).

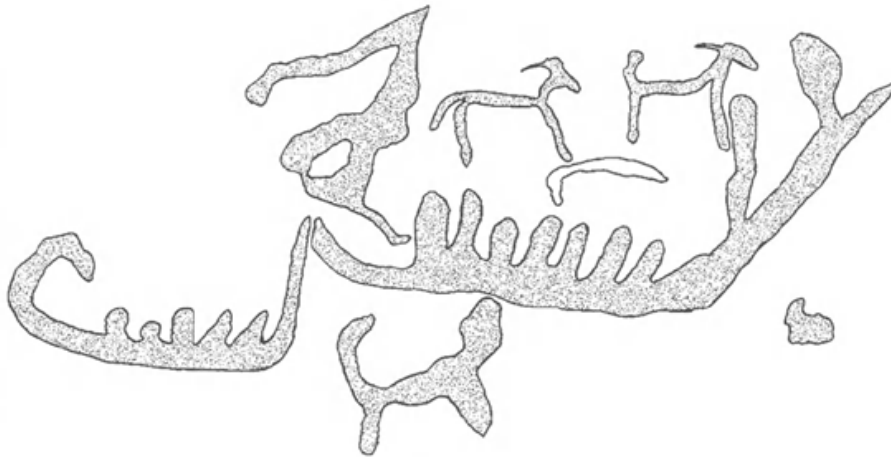


Fig. 2. Rock-engraving from Strophilas with animals on a ship (Televantou 2009, pl. 88b).

2000, 135–36).

The population decline was one of the most serious problems faced by EC communities, which, among other causes, could have been attributed to infertility and the unequal ratio between men and women. To address this, the movement of people (especially women) between communities or even between islands was crucial, as healthy descendants were ensured by exogamy. It is reasonable to assume that exogamy was generally consensual, by mutual agreement between families or communities. However, the forcible abduction of women also seems possible, especially given the “heroic” context in which such actions are carried out by societies that often accept and undertake robbery and piracy. Thus, the abduction of women may have increased significantly in times of crisis, when the population was dramatically reduced (e.g., due to a shipwreck or disease), so that the forcible transportation of women from another region or island for procreation was one of the few available options for community survival.

The potentially important role of the abduction of women and animals in the EBA Cyclades is further strengthened by ethnographic parallels from societies with weak or absent major state organizations and high mortality due to wars or ways of life, in which such practices were commonplace. For example, at least in the 13th century CE, in the Chaco Canyon region of the United States, raiding for women for reproductive or labor reasons was a well-established practice, and successful warriors were associated with polygyny (Kohler and



Fig. 3. Frying pan from Chalandriani with longboat and pubic triangle. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. Π4974 (photo by [G.E. Koronaïos](#)).

Turner 2006). In South Sudan, the traditional practices of woman abduction and cattle raiding among ethnic groups are still in use, as women and cattle are the main source of household wealth even today (e.g., Lacey 2013; Wild et al. 2018, Mayik 2020). According to the customary laws of these societies, cattle –in addition to the milk and meat they provide to a household– are linked to the bride-price and the practices of arranged and forced marriage (Lacey 2013, 94–6). Consequently, cattle owning allows a man to marry, not only economically but also symbolically. On the other hand, a woman's social value is closely related to her procreative potential to continue the lineage (by giving birth to boys) and to increase the family's wealth (by giving birth to girls, who will be exchanged for cattle and other valuable objects and goods when they reach marriageable age). Women who are raiding trophies are even more valuable, since they are added to the workforce of the family and provide descendants without a price being paid.

Considering the ways and means of living, the high mortality rate and the isolation that sometimes existed on the islands (for isolation in the EBA Cyclades, see Broodbank 2000, 191–94), there can be no doubt that for the small and fragile EC communities the role of women was vital. The constant iconographic combination of longboats with pubic triangles on the frying pans from Chalandriani (Fig. 3) seems to suggest the relationship between sea voyages and women on a symbolic or even a real level (Broodbank 2000, 251–53; Mina 2010, 236), reinforcing the possibility of a link between raiding and the demographic strengthening of a community through procreation with women imported from outside the normal community.

Regarding the importance and the role of women in the EBA Cyclades, Sherratt (2000, 135), observing the



Fig. 4. Female marble figurine in a state of pregnancy, found in Koumasa, Crete. Herakleion, Archaeological Museum (after Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 72).

passive stance of the numerous marble female figurines and the emphatic depiction of the pubic triangle and the breasts (i.e., the predominant symbols of female fertility), argues that in the EC communities women were treated as booty or trophies that were even moved by force in order to provide healthy descendants. This view seems to be strengthened by the fact that some of these figurines are depicted in a state of pregnancy (see also Broodbank 2000, 61, fig. 9a; Marangou 1990, 152, cat. no. 158; Fig. 4).

In sharp contrast to the passive stance of the female figurines, the active stance of the few (but existing) male figurines of the “hunter-warrior type”, with a dagger emphatically depicted (Fig. 5), may express the perceptions and social roles of the period (Nakou 1995, 9–13; Broodbank 2000, 253). In the rare class of male figurines, bravery and achievements are indicated, through the use of violence (dagger), in contrast to female figurines, which are passive and emphasize the symbols of fertility. This intense contrast between the male and female figurines probably reflects the role of the genders in EBA society. In the EC communities, high-status activities such as sea voyages with longboats and raids were largely associated with men (Broodbank 1993, 327; 2000, 215; Sherratt 2000, 135–36), while women appear passive and mostly associated with sexuality and procreation. Nevertheless, the large number of female figurines may reveal that, despite their passivity, women were extremely valuable to the EC communities.



Fig. 5. Drawing of a male marble figurine of the “hunter-warrior type”. London, British Museum, inv. no. 1955,0820.9 (© Trustees of the British Museum).

Relationships between sea voyages, trade, and women, as well as manifestations of violence, may be suggested by the deliberate breakage of folded-arms female figurines in the Kavos “special deposit” on Keros (Androutsopoulou 2013, 47). Because of the large number of figurines found in the deposit and the deliberate breakage, most scholars attribute this breakage to ritual practices that took place in a funerary or religious context (e.g., Dumas 1972, 163; Davis 1984, 16; Renfrew 1984, 27–8; Barber 1987, 132; Sotirakopoulou 2005, 329–30). If this is the case, the quantity of the figurines, the way they were handled, and the fact that only fragments of the abdomen, vulva and legs have been found in the depository may shed light on the way women were treated in religion and, by extension, in EBA society.

The role of men and women in the EBA society and economy, as reflected in the aforementioned aspects of material culture, namely in the anthropomorphic figurines, the frying pans, the general presence of weapons, and the way of using the above objects, as well as the importance and the “heroic” character of sea voyages for island communities, suggest that exogamy and the acquisition of objects, raw materials, and animals were of vital importance and that in order for community survival and growth everything was legitimate. In the context of raids, therefore, woman and animal abductions were probably a common practice, and constituted a major source of social power and prestige for the warriors-pirates who provided them to the community.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Major changes in the settlement patterns and the ways of living are usually considered to be a result of the emergence of new needs and demands. In this regard, the abandonment of coastal sites and the move to fortified sites away from the sea are often attributed to threats and invasions from the sea. Therefore, a brief synopsis of the settlement patterns of the EBA Cyclades and the identification of such changes may be able to contribute to the debate on the phenomenon of piracy during this period (see Angelopoulou, this volume for a more comprehensive discussion on the EC settlement patterns).

The EC I settlements appear to be scattered and short-lived (Broodbank 2000, 150–51, 154–56; Angelopoulou 2016–2017, 134). They were small settlements, based mainly on the agricultural economy, while their external contacts were limited. The settlements of the EC IIA period were also small in size and duration, with a few exceptions of larger and more organized settlements, such as Ayia Irini on Kea (Caskey 1971, 368–72; Broodbank 2000, 216–18; see also Wilson 1999, 2013), Dhaskalio on Keros (Boyd 2013, Renfrew 2013), and Skarkos on Ios (Marthari 1997, 2008a, 2018). The settlements of this period were mainly coastal or near the sea and at nodal points of sea routes, indicating the interest of their inhabitants in sea voyages. There seems to have been some concern for protection from sea raids, by choosing either defensible sites, as in the case of Dhaskalio, or sites at a short distance from the sea, as at Skarkos (Broodbank 2000, 212–21; Angelopoulou 2016–2017, 134–35).

An even stronger concern for protection from the sea emerged in the following EC IIB period. Several settlements were now situated on defensible hilltops, and many of them were reinforced by strong fortification walls. For example, settlements like Kastri on Syros (Marthari 1998, 2017), Panormos on Naxos (Angelopoulou 2014, 67–88), Kynthos on Delos (MacGillivray 1980) and Markiani on Amorgos (Marangou 2006, 81–93) indicate feelings of danger and insecurity. Kastri and Panormos were indeed destroyed and then abandoned, probably after a maritime raid. This change in the settlement pattern from sites near the sea to defensible sites on high and steep hills and with strong fortification walls, combined with the evidence of attack, destruction and abandonment observed in at least two settlements, are indications of the fear during this period and the violent raids that seem to have come from the sea.

SETTLEMENTS WITH POSSIBLE PIRATE ACTIVITY

In order to be able to recognize that a small or large part of the community of a settlement was involved (either occasionally or systematically) in pirate activity, this settlement should present some or all the features identified by the A.P.Pir.A. project: coastal and defensible sites, not easily visible but close to at least one safe harbor, nodal point for the nearby sea routes, fortification walls, etc. (see in more detail Samaras, this volume). Moreover, in settlements of this type, valuable and exotic objects are often found, the presence of which is sometimes not adequately explained by other “legal” activities (see also Samaras 2015, 191–92).

Settlements in naturally defensible sites, close to the sea, and with strong fortification walls have already been witnessed in the FN period and the EBA I, as can be seen at Strophilas on Andros (Televantou 2006, 2008, 2018a) and Vathy on Astypalaia (Vlachopoulos and Angelopoulou 2019; Vlachopoulos 2021). As mentioned above, ship rock-engravings have been found at both these sites, some of which even decorate the main gates of the fortified settlements. It is noteworthy that in Strophilas there are over a hundred rock-engravings with this theme, making the ship a symbol of the community and revealing its naval orientation. Several metal objects have also been found in the same settlement, including a metal spearhead, while in Vathy there are rock-engravings of a unique theme with daggers, symbols of bravery and heroism indicating violent actions. Considering that material culture is a powerful means of social display, it may be possible to accept the view that ships transmitted messages of collective power and weapons that of individual power.

Both the position of these two settlements, at defensible locations close to the coast and with supervision of the sea passages, and the presence of fortifications, metal objects, as well as the themes of the rock-engravings, indicate prosperity, seafaring, and involvement in warlike activities. So, even before EBA II, participation in sea voyages brought wealth to the communities, but at the same time there was fear from the sea. After all, island communities were systematically engaged in trade and sea voyages as early as the FN–EBA I period (Papadatos and Tomkins 2013, 355, 374); therefore, it is not unlikely that banditry was practiced in the context of these voyages, even if during this period these phenomena seem to have been sporadic and opportunistic.

As mentioned above, the intensification of maritime contacts during EBA II may have motivated the increase in pirate raids, a fact that seems to be documented by the presence of more fortified settlements. The possible outbreak of piracy may even suggest the existence of pirate settlements, without this necessarily implying that there were communities exclusively engaged in pirate activities.

Kastri on Syros (Marthari 2006, 2007, 2008b) displays several characteristics usually found in pirate bases (see also Yeagley 2022, esp. 95–7). It is a short-lived settlement, since it was inhabited only during the EC IIB period, and is located on a high and steep hill above the sea, in a position that is extremely difficult to access. The natural defense of the site was further reinforced by the construction of a complex fortification system, in which the main wall had horseshoe-shaped bastions. At the same time, the site provided visual control of the sea routes to Tenos, Andros and southern Euboea towards the north, and to Rheneia, Delos, Mykonos and Naxos towards the south (Broodbank 2000, 243–44). In addition, bronze objects made of tin bronze have been found at the site, which are prestige objects because of the raw material used in their manufacture, especially tin, which is imported from the east. A metalworking workshop has also been found within the fortified settlement.

Taking into account the fact that during the previous period Chalandriani seems to have been a community with a sufficient number of inhabitants to man a ship, with rich graves that have yielded many metal objects, Cycladic figurines and frying pans with ship depictions, it turns out that the community actively participated in sea voyages and perhaps flourished because of them (Broodbank 1989, 324–25; Hekman 2003, 17; Marthari 2010, 116). During the following period, the settlement of Chalandriani was abandoned, and a new one was founded on the adjacent defensible hill of Kastri with the above-mentioned characteristics.

Therefore, on the one hand, the inhabitants of Chalandriani and Kastri were involved in maritime activities, with piracy probably being one of them, which enabled them to transport goods, people, and valuable objects to their community. On the other hand, it seems that they were also afraid of raids from the sea, especially in the EC IIB phase, since they took strong defensive measures, even though in the end the settlement was most probably destroyed by such an attack.

Panormos on Naxos (Angelopoulou 2014, 67–88), Kynthos on Delos (MacGillivray 1980), and Markiani on Amorgos (Marangou 2006, 81–93) display similar characteristics, as they were fortified settlements in naturally defensible sites, where the inhabitants have in their possession valuable oriental objects.

According to the above, defense and protection measures are a timeless feature in the Cyclades already from the FN and at least up to the end of EBA II. They appeared with the establishment of maritime contacts and increased when these contacts intensified and valuable goods were concentrated in the Aegean. Moreover, the same people who took defensive measures, possessed valuable objects that could be obtained either by participating in maritime trade or by raiding. Taking into account that during the period under consideration, activities such as robbery and piracy probably did not have the negative connotation that is given to them today, and that in the face of survival such activities were not only legitimate but could even constitute “heroic” acts, it seems very likely that the same people who participated in trade would have carried out pirate raids in times of crisis or when the opportunity arose. Besides, according to Agouridis (1997, 20), “trading and raiding are often the two sides of the same coin”, which means that no distinction can be drawn between them, and consequently between their archaeological footprints. It is true that the boundaries between trade and piracy are blurred, especially in such early periods, but at the same time this assumption concludes that the same people were engaged in both activities.

Also, in periods of intensive large-scale contacts and without the existence of a strong central power, as is the case of the EBA Aegean (see also Driessen, this volume), it is almost unlikely that raids for quick and immediate profit would not take place. More generally, most island communities were able to practice piracy, some more and some less, and probably did so alongside other activities.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, it seems quite likely that in the context of the EBA sea voyages, not only trade was practiced, but also piracy. The frequency of this phenomenon cannot be determined, but there are other aspects that can be understood with greater certainty. During the period under discussion, and especially in EBA II, there were both the appropriate means (i.e., ships suitable for raiding) and strong motives, sometimes even linked to survival. At the same time, the absence of a central power created ideal conditions for piracy to flourish. Indeed, it seems that in prehistory such acts did not carry the negative connotations that are attached to it today, as the legality or the illegality of an action was not perceived in the same way. On the contrary, a daring and dangerous action may have been considered an act of bravery and glory.

Therefore, the motivation for piracy was not only driven by material factors, which would ensure survival and/or the acquisition of wealth. Participation in risky activities, such as sea voyages and piracy, increased the reputation and power of those who took part in them. It proved their martial and naval prowess and thus gained the respect of the whole community. Through the possession of valuable objects and people it ensured the perpetuation of future generations and the community, the warrior-pirates also demonstrated their power and thus strengthened their social status and legitimized their authority.

The evidence in the material culture may be indirect but, complementary to the possible perceptions of the period, seems to suggest that piracy may have been practiced in the EBA Aegean by the same people who participated in maritime trade. It is very likely that the traders of the EBA were at the same time warriors, pirates and hunters, charged with the duty of providing their community with essential goods, animals and women, either through exchanges or through raids. In general, the trap of interpreting all relevant finds as the result of trading activities should be avoided, especially in periods with no written sources, such as the EBA. On the contrary, the strong possibility that a greater or lesser part of the maritime traffic of people and goods is due to piracy should always remain open.



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The Art of War in Prehistoric Aegean

Early Cycladic Fortified Citadels and Weapons

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ABSTRACT

The development of habitation in the Cyclades during the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BCE) is little known, as a result of the limited number of investigated Early Cycladic settlements. The proliferation of fortified sites and the development of weaponry imply an increased interest in defense during the Early Cycladic II period (middle of the 3rd millennium BCE). The establishment and the violent abandonment, following war-like conflict, of the fortified citadels at Kastri on Syros and Korphari ton Amygdalion on Naxos (2500–2300/2200 BCE), are considered signs of the arrival of new populations that marked an era of crisis and intense competition in the islands.

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the significance of both fortifications and weaponry for the evolution of the Cycladic civilization. The war conflicts associated with the phenomenon of piracy are not a symptom of an era of cultural decline and regression. Hostility intensified in a period of prosperity as this is reflected in settlement patterns, demography, economy, society, and last but not least in the expanded cultural contacts in the Aegean during the Early Bronze Age. The Early Cycladic fortified citadels are outstanding examples of collective work – a milestone in the evolution from small farming communities to large “urban” ones.

INTRODUCTION

The enduring phenomenon of war is a complex process in which the role of defense systems has undoubtedly been crucial. As far as the Cyclades are concerned, the development of fortifications during the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (3rd millennium BCE) was an integral part of the evolution of Early Cycladic (EC) settlements with important social, economic and cultural implications. The aim of this paper is to give a brief overview of the EC fortified settlements and to assess their significance for the knowledge of cultural continuity and change. EC weaponry is also presented, hoping to show its importance for a number of aspects related to war tactics, technological innovations, social status and cultural interactions.

NEOLITHIC ANTECEDENTS

The defensive wall of Strophilas on the western coast of Andros is considered to be the precursor of the EC fortifications (Televantou 2006, 4–5; 2008, 43–5, 53; 2009, 122–24; 2017, 264; Figs. 1a–b, 2a–b). The wall of Strophilas, dated to the final phase of the Late Neolithic (LN), i.e., the Final Neolithic (FN) or Chalcolithic period (late 4th millennium BCE), is the earliest known example of fortification construction in the Cyclades.



Fig. 1: (a) Map of Andros (Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades); (b) Strophilas, aerial view. The fortification wall and the outwork (Televantou 2009, pl. 81b).

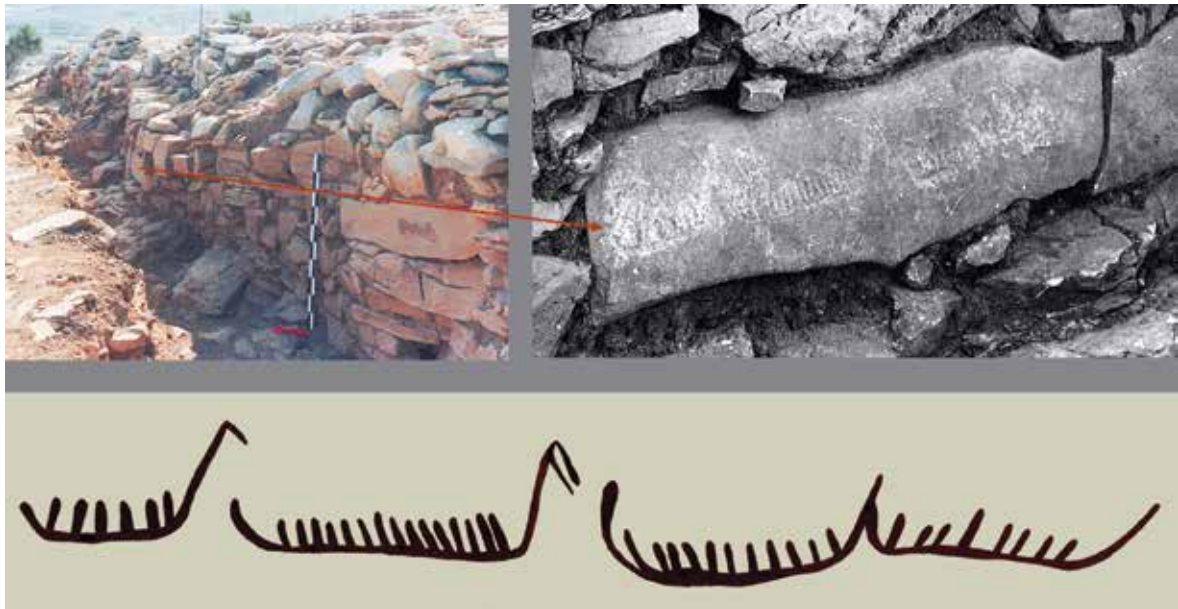


Fig. 2: (a) Strophilas, the fortification wall (Televantou 2009, pl. 82b); (b) Strophilas, the central bastion of the fortification wall. Rock-art representations of ships (Televantou 2017, fig. 6).

The discovery of Strophilas revealed significant new evidence regarding the development of Cycladic civilization. Common characteristics recognized in the topography of settlement sites, the arrangement of the fortification and the material culture, represent the uninterrupted cultural continuity between the Neolithic and the EBA.

The settlement occupies the top of a naturally fortified promontory, in close proximity to the sea and in a privileged position to control sea and land routes of communication (Fig. 1b). The location of the stone-built wall with solid, curvilinear bastions and a possible outer wall to the north, which was easily accessible from the land, and for this reason more vulnerable side of the settlement, testifies to an organized defense plan (Figs. 1b, 2a).

Also unique in the history of Aegean art are the complex rock-art compositions of Strophilas, among which those with depictions of ships, symbols of power and wealth, found on the defensive wall stand out (Televantou 2006, 6–7; 2008, 47–8; 2009, 127–8; 2017, 267, fig. 6; Fig. 2b).

The rock-art depictions of ships testify to the involvement of the inhabitants in maritime activities such as trading (Televantou 2008, 47, 51). They offer important new evidence for the emergence of the longboat and of a wide network of maritime contacts and cultural interactions between the Cyclades and other Aegean communities, for example Kephala Petras on east Crete, as early as the FN period (Televantou 2008, 47, 51; Papadatos and Thomkins 2013, 355, 369–76). Last but not least, the participation of Strophilas' community in collective endeavors, such as navigation, and the construction of communal works, such as fortification walls, is considered to reveal a significantly high level of social organization (Televantou 2006, 11; 2008, 53; 2009, 138–40; 2017, 270).

GROTTA-PELOS AND KEROS-SYROS EVIDENCE

The study of settlement patterns in the Cyclades, as well as the evolution of defensive systems during the succeeding EC period (3rd millennium BCE), is a broad but difficult field of research due to the extremely limited number of excavated EC settlements. The end of the Neolithic period and especially the first phase of the EC period (EC I) correspond to the floruit of the so-called Grotta-Pelos culture (3200–2700 BCE) and mark the beginning of important cultural changes in the Cyclades.

Our knowledge of the EC I settlements is restricted (Doumas 1972, 151–52; Broodbank 2000, 151; Stampolidis and Sotirakopoulou 2011a, 32; Angelopoulou 2016, 55; 2016–2017, 134), and, compared to the Neolithic era, EC I installations are scattered, more numerous, limited in size and short-lived. Confirmed examples of EC I fortified settlements are not known, with the only possible exception being Markiani on Amorgos. The high hill of Markiani is a naturally defensive site overlooking the steep slopes of the southern coast of Amorgos (Marangou 2006a, 5–7; Fig. 3a). Markiani was first occupied at the beginning of the EC period (Renfrew 2006, 248). The small agricultural installation of EC I was replaced by a significantly larger fortified settlement during the following EC II phase (around the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE) (Whitelaw 2006, 19–20). Although the defensive wall of Markiani dates to EC II (mid-3rd millennium BCE; Fig. 3b), it is likely that it was founded much earlier, during EC I (Marangou 2006b, 86; Renfrew 2006, 248), proving the existence of a well-organized early community (Renfrew 2006, 253).

The succeeding EC II phase of the so-called Keros-Syros culture (2700–2200 BCE) is the preeminent period of expansion of the Cycladic culture, as shown by the profound cultural developments and population growth with the dispersion of habitation sites throughout the geographical range of the Cyclades (Doumas 1972, 158–68; Broodbank 2000, 179; Angelopoulou 2016, 56; 2016–2017, 134). Among the settlements of this time are elements of differentiation in terms of size and wealth, with typical examples being those of Chalandriani on Syros, Skarkos on Ios, Ayia Irini on Kea, and Dhaskalio on Keros (Broodbank 2000, 212–21).

On the plateau of Chalandriani on the northeast coast of Syros, an important EC II settlement as well as a cemetery are located (Marthari 1998; 2017a, 142–44; Broodbank 2000, 212–6; Hekman 2003; Fig. 4a). Remains of the prehistoric settlement are preserved under the modern village of Chalandriani. Although the settlement is little known, it is considered to be one of the most significant habitation sites on the island of Syros (Marthari 1998, 22; 2017a, 144; Broodbank 2000, 214; Hekman 2003, 85–6). This is indicated by the nearby burial ground of Chalandriani, the largest, so far, known cemetery in the Cyclades (Tsountas 1899, 77–115; Doumas 1977, 128–30; Hekman 2003; Marthari 2017a, 144–52).

The discovery of the cemetery of Chalandriani brought new perspectives to our knowledge of the Aegean prehistory. Variations observed in the number and quality of the burial gifts, but also in the way the tombs were constructed, testify to the existence of distinguished social groups in the community (Hekman 2003, 191–97). The close connection of the inhabitants with maritime activities is revealed by the depictions of ships, the largest in number images of Cycladic longboats dated to the 3rd millennium BCE, on vessels such as the “frying-pans” found in the cemetery of Chalandriani (Coleman 1985; Broodbank 2000, 215; Jarriel 2018, 64, 69).

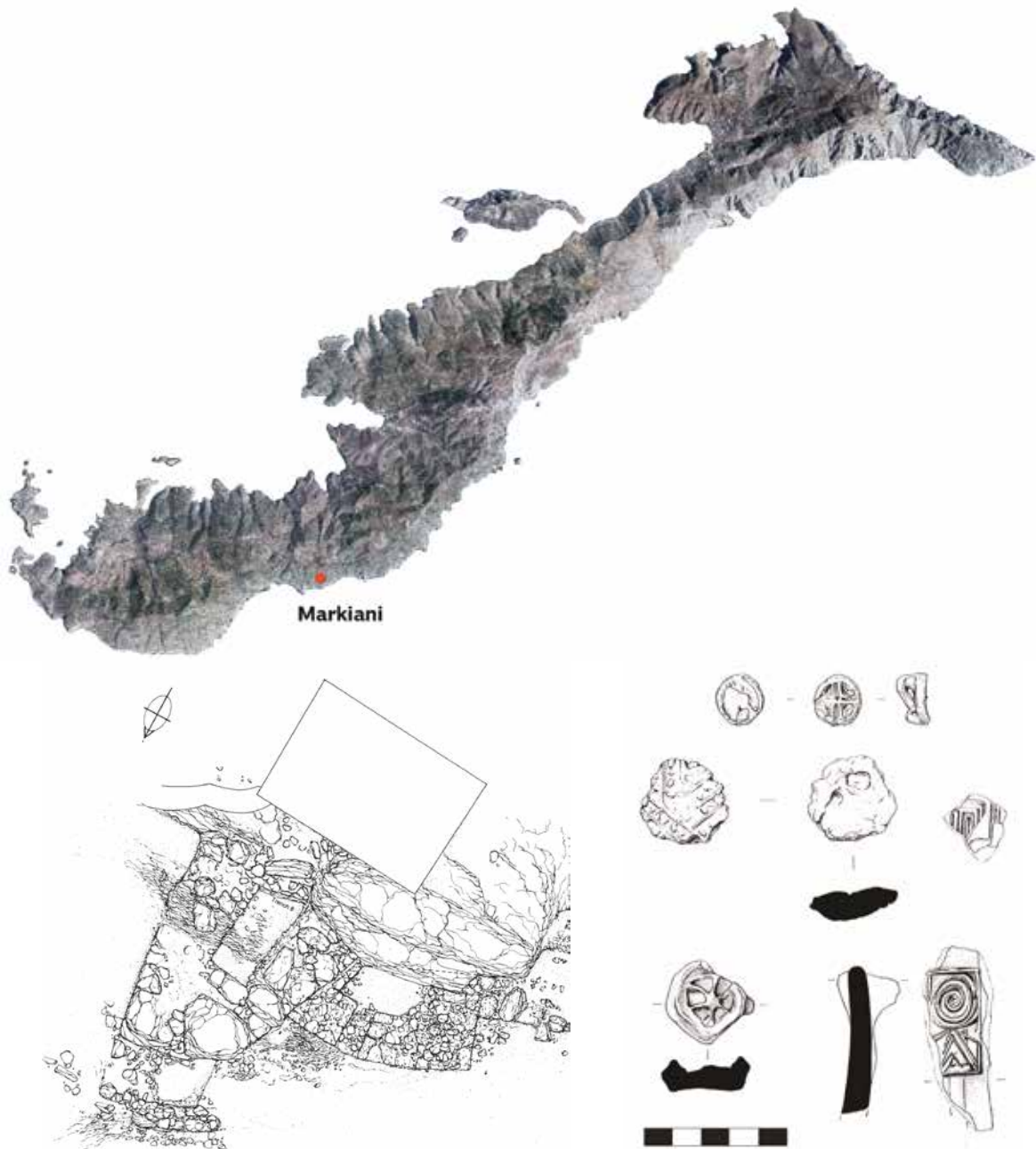


Fig. 3: (a) Map of Amorgos (Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades); (b) Markiani, the fortification wall showing the north bastion (Marangou 2006b, fig. 6.1); (c) Markiani, lead seal and clay sealings (Angelopoulou 2006, fig. 8.25).

The area remained the focus of significant cultural activity during the EC II Late (2500–2300/2200 BCE), when the local residential center is thought to have moved to the naturally fortified hill at Kastri, on top of which a smaller and fortified settlement was founded (see below) (Davis 1987, 33; Broodbank 2000, 214).

The EC settlement of Ayia Irini was built on a low promontory on the northwest coast of Kea and in the same location as the city of the Late Bronze Age (2nd millennium BCE). The discovery of the early settlement of Ayia Irini is of special importance for the residential development in Kea. Ayia Irini is characterized by successive phases of occupation dated to the LN/FN and the EC II (Ayia Irini I–III) (Wilson 1999; 2013). It is an extensive and well-organized settlement with multiple building phases, communal works (sewage system, cobbled roads) and spacious well-built houses in some cases, possibly two-storied (House ED) (Caskey 1971, 362, 368–72; 1972, 370–75; Wilson and Eliot 1984, 83–6; Schofield 1998, 119–20; Broodbank 2000, 218; Wilson 2013, 394–95).

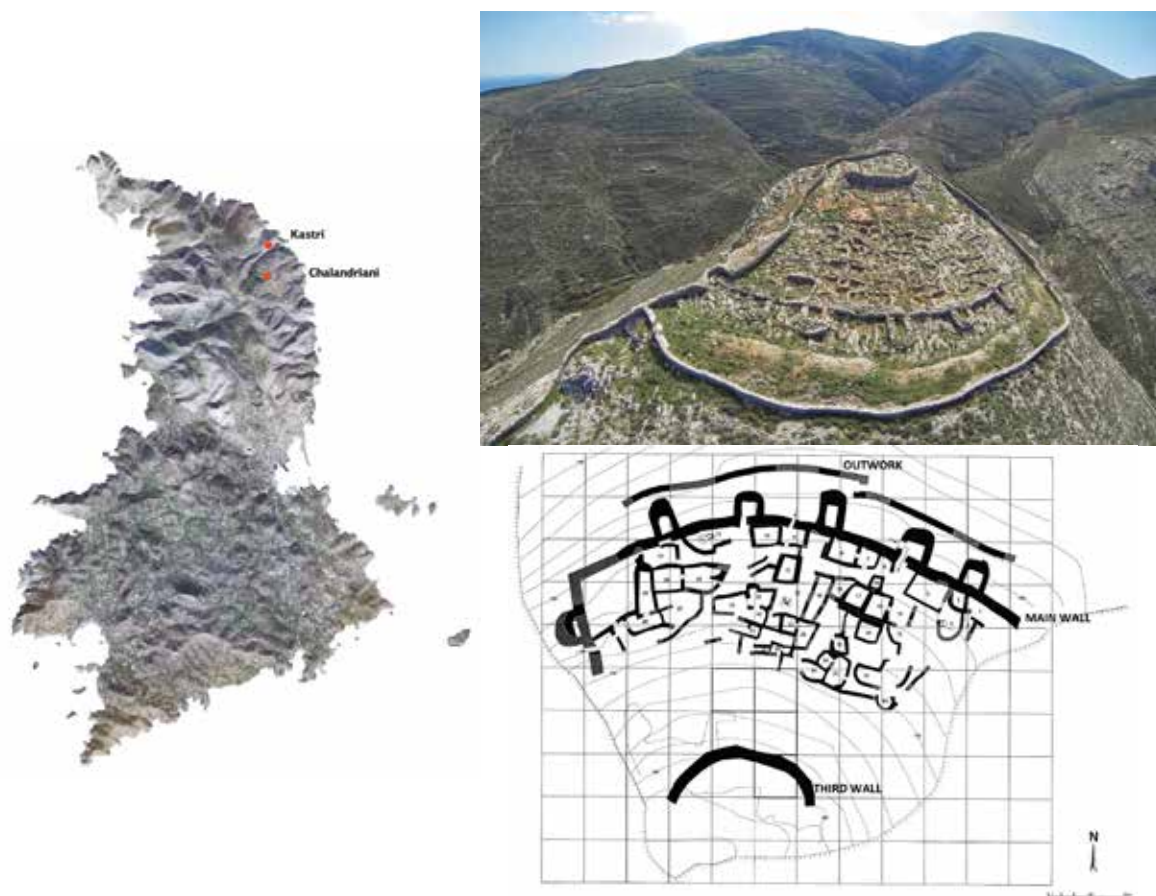


Fig. 4: (a) Map of Syros (Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades); (b) Kastri, aerial view (Marthari 2017a, fig. 1); (c) Kastri, plan of the fortified acropolis (after Marthari 2006, fig. 2).

Ayia Irini is considered to have been more of a commercial than an agricultural settlement, due to its location in the sheltered bay of Ayios Nikolaos. Imported pottery and metals from the Cyclades, Attica and Euboea bear witness to the prominent role of the settlement in the Aegean interaction networks (Cherry et al. 1991, 226; Schofield 1998, 119; Wilson 1999, 20, 228, 231–39; 2013, 403, 408).

The excellent state of preservation of the site of Skarkos on the western coast of Ios provides us with the opportunity to study a significant EC II village-level community (Marthari 1997, 1999, 2001–2004, 2008a, 2017b, 2018). The low hill of Skarkos is located in the most fertile valley of the island and overlooks the natural harbor of Ios. The extensive Keros-Syros settlement has a well-organized plan with building *insulae*, big two-storey edifices and public works such as streets, squares and a drainage system.

There are indications of craft specialization and differences in the social status of the inhabitants, suggesting the existence of a socially and economically sophisticated community with active participation in the network of external contacts of the time (Marthari 1997, 377; 1999, 23–8; 2008a, 79–84; 2017b, 133–34; 2018, 175–93).

Dhaskalio (Renfrew et al. 2013) proves the existence of different development models between the islands. On the islet of Dhaskalio, close to the western end of Keros, the largest known EC settlement with three successive phases of occupation (Phases A–C) is considered to be located, dating to EC II and EC III (2750–2300 BCE)¹ (Renfrew et al. 2013, 74; Bronk Ramsey et al. 2013, 702–3, table 33.6; Sotirakopoulou 2016, 351–77, 391).

¹ Radiocarbon dates from Dhaskalio place the end of Phase C to the EC III (2300 BCE), a century or two earlier than suggested for the end of the EC period (Renfrew 1972, 221). As noted by the authors, this is a matter to be assessed further based on comparable evidence from other sites (Bronk Ramsey et al. 2013, 702–3).

The habitation site is located in a particularly privileged position for maritime activities, considering the fact that during the EBA the islet was connected to Keros through an isthmus with two protected natural harbors-anchorage (Dixon and Kinnaid 2013, 45–55; Renfrew 2013, 705; Jarriel 2018, 66, 69). The importance of Dhaskalio as a major trade center in the Aegean is emphasized by the exceptionally large number of imports (artifacts and raw materials) attested (Renfrew 2013, 718–19; Sotirakopoulou 2016, 388).

The settlement of Dhaskalio was densely built, with structures of public, possibly religious character, and certified craft activities (Renfrew 2013, 705–21; Boyd 2013, 341–85; Gavalas 2013, 514; Georgakopoulou 2013, 667, 670–72, 683–85, 689–92). The habitation site is part of a wider archaeological unit and is connected to the activities that took place on the opposite coast of Keros, known as Kavos (Renfrew 2013, 711).

In Kavos, residential remains were discovered as well as the so-called “Special Deposits”, which represent a unique in number, typological variety and high-quality group of objects (marble figurines and vases, pottery, metal objects etc.) (Doumas 1964, 410; Renfrew et al. 2015; Broodbank 2000, 223–36). The finds of Kavos have been interpreted as the remains of an exceptionally large cemetery associated with a local and prosperous trading community (Doumas 1972, 163; Broodbank 2000, 225–30). On the other hand, Kavos is considered to have been a pan-Cycladic sanctuary for the ritual deposition of prestigious objects around the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE (Renfrew 2015, 555–60).

This brief overview of the large, prosperous and unfortified settlements of EC II is necessary to assess the importance of the fortified habitation sites that appear during the mature phase of EC II (second half of the 3rd millennium BCE).

KASTRI GROUP AND FORTIFIED CENTERS

This period, also known as the Kastri group phase (2500–2300/2200 BCE), named after the homonymous fortified acropolis in Syros (Fig. 4a), is characterized by the intensification of relations with the East and the islands of the northeastern Aegean, a phenomenon probably related to the development of metallurgy and the search for new raw materials (tin) for the manufacture of copper alloys (Angelopoulou 2003, 184; 2008, 162–63; 2014, 502–3). Through the metal trade routes, new types of pottery and especially of drinking and pouring vessels were introduced in the Aegean, which are also considered to express the adoption of Anatolian drinking customs and social practices (Renfrew 1972, 150, 172–73, 194, 203–4, 207, 533–34, fig. II.2, table 9.II; Sotirakopoulou 1993; 2016, 354–77; Wilson 1999, 238; Broodbank 2000, 285, 309–19, 332–33; Angelopoulou 2003; 2008; 2014, 117–18, 483–503). The selective emulation of eastern cultural elements and practices by the islanders is also evident in defensive architecture, as it will be shown below.

This era is marked by the existence of an increased threat of conflict in the Cyclades. The destruction and abandonment of fortified settlements has been interpreted as symptomatic of a period of turmoil associated with the intrusion of foreign hostile populations originating from Asia Minor or the northeastern Aegean (Rutter 1979, 8–9; 1983, 71; Gale and Stos-Gale 1984, 268–71; Doumas 1988, 26–9; Manning 1995, 61).

Fortified settlements dated to the EC II Late are known from sites such as Kastri on Syros, Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos) on Naxos, Markiani on Amorgos and Kynthos on Delos (MacGillivray 1980, 7). Common characteristics concerning the topographic setting of the sites, i.e., the choice of naturally defensive hilltops near the sea and in privileged positions for the supervision of maritime and land routes of communication, as well as the organization of the fortification and the material culture, testify that the Kastri group fortified settlements were created by the islanders themselves and not by foreign invaders (Angelopoulou 2014, 512; 2016–2017, 144). Among the EC fortified citadels, the best preserved are those at Kastri, Markiani and Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos).

Kastri, on the northeastern mountainous coast of Syros, is a point of reference for the study of fortified settlements and war tactics (Fig. 4b–c). The acropolis of Kastri is located in close proximity to the rich settlement and the cemetery of Chalandriani (Tsountas 1899, 115–21; Bossert 1967; Doumas 1972, 158–62; Broodbank 2000, 215, 244; Marthari 2006; 2007; 2008b; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2017a, 144–47). It is considered to have been founded during the EC II Late by the local population (Broodbank 2000, 214). The acropolis was built on top of a steep hill, which provided the tactical advantage of being difficult to reach by land, while at the same time it gave the possibility to command the important sea route leading from Attica and Euboea to the central Cyclades. The defensive advantage of the site, especially in cases of surprise attacks, such as raids, is complemented by three lines of defense in the form of superimposed arched enclosures on the northern, accessible from the seaside, area of the hill: an outwork, a main wall with horseshoe-shaped bastions and a third enceinte around the top that protected a roofed area used for storage and small gatherings (Marthari 2006, 116–18; 2007, 50–2; 2008b, 87–91; Fig. 4b–c). The type of fortification in the form of a wall with horseshoe-shaped bastions is considered to have originated in the East (Höckmann 1977, 161; Cosmopoulos 1991, 156; Sotirakopoulou 2008, 545). Bastions are active elements of defense, related to the launching of flanking fire, a highly desirable warfare tactic when engaging an enemy line formation.

The bulwark also reveals strategic planning as far as the organization of defense is concerned. As aptly noted by Christos Tsountas (1899, 120), the rampart was lower in height than the main wall to protect the defenders from enemy strikes in case this first defensive enclosure was taken by the attackers.

The abandonment of the citadel is attributed to a war conflict. Between the rampart and the main wall with the towers numerous sea pebbles were discovered, supposedly used as sling shots (Tsountas 1899, 120).

The acropolis was densely built with small, tightly packed, irregular stone-built houses, accessible through narrow passages. Despite its small size (approximately 0.5 ha), Kastri is clearly characterized by common elements in terms of social organization, economy and external contacts with the larger settlements of the EC II (Skarkos, Ayia Irini, Dhaskalio) mentioned above. In particular, the citadel at Kastri yielded evidence for specialized craft activities, such as metalworking and woodworking (Tsountas 1899, 124–26; Bossert 1967, 60–4; Broodbank 2000, 215). The existence of an organized society at Kastri is implied by the discovery of the unique silver diadem with a scene possibly of a ritual character, which denotes the prominent social status of its owner (Tsountas 1899, 123–24, pl. 10; Marthari 1998, 28; Broodbank 2000, 215).

Last but not least, pottery and metal objects, imports or local imitations of artifacts originating in the East or the northeastern Aegean, confirm the maintenance by the local community of an active network of long-range external contacts (Tsountas 1899, 122, 124; Bossert 1967, 61–75; Renfrew 1972, 314, 533–34; Gale and Stos-Gale 1984, 268–71; 2008, 405; Stos-Gale et al. 1984, 23).

A fortification wall with a possible outwork protected the aforementioned settlement of Markiani during EC II Late (Fig. 3b). A stone-built wall with horseshoe-shaped towers, similar to that of Kastri, was discovered in the north (landward) and easily accessible side of the settlement (Marangou 2006b, 86–7). The defensive advantage of the site was also enhanced by the strong north winds that sweep the area of the fortification (Marangou 2006b, 87), forcing the enemy to fight on a considerable difficult terrain.

Markiani had a predominantly agricultural character with very little evidence of trade interactions (Renfrew 2006, 251–53). Nevertheless, the existence of Anatolianizing pottery types (depas, tankards) of the Kastri group period (Eskitzioglou 2006, 139, 143–46, fig. 7.19:1–8, pl. 35a–d) clearly suggests that the local community was well-connected and followed the cultural trends of an era of great mobility and change.

The existence of defensive works, the evidence of a range of craft activities and the discovery of a lead seal and sealings (Angelopoulou 2006, 219–22; Fig. 3c), insignia of persons of high rank, testify that the people leaving at Markiani were not simply members of a small and isolated agricultural community (Renfrew 2006, 253–55).

The acropolis of Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos) on the southeastern coast of Naxos has revealed important new evidence for the defensive architecture and the character of the fortified settlement sites of the

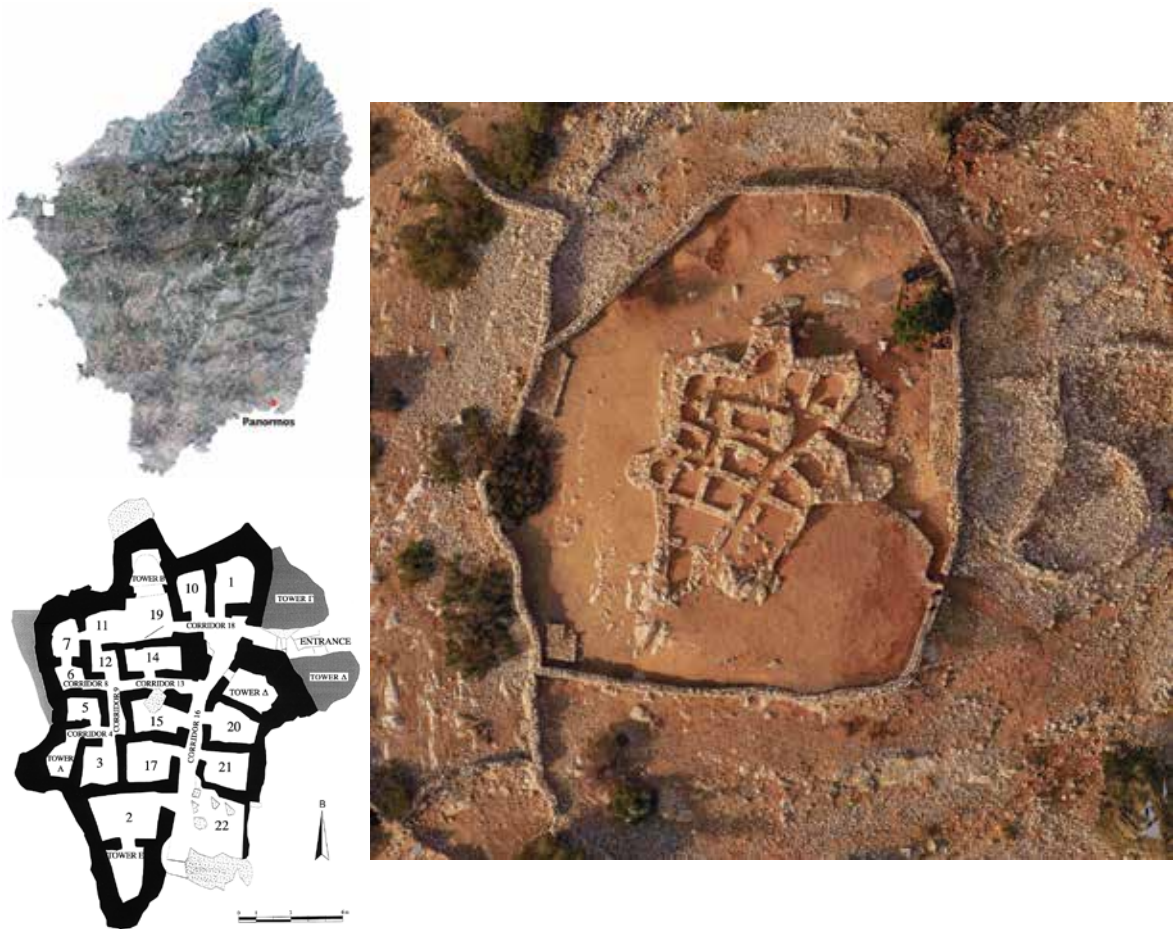


Fig. 5: (a) Map of Naxos (Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades); (b) Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos), aerial view (Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades); (c) Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos), plan of the fortified acropolis (Angelopoulou 2014, fig. 1.15).

Kastri group period (Angelopoulou 2003; 2008; 2014; 2016; 2016–2017; Fig. 5a–c). The low rocky hill named Korphari ton Amygdalion is located in close proximity to the bay of Panormos, one of the safest natural harbors of the island, offering protection from the strong northern winds.

It is a naturally fortified site surrounded by higher hills. It commands the adjacent natural harbor of Panormos, without being easily visible from the sea. Moreover, the site provides an excellent view over an extended area stretching from Amorgos, Keros and Kouphonisia to Schinousa and Herakleia, controlling the sea routes leading to these islands (Angelopoulou 2003, 170; 2008, 150; 2014, 20; 2016, 59; 2016–2017, 141).

On the summit of the hill, the remains of a fortified acropolis of the Kastri Group period were discovered, extending over an area of 285 m² (Angelopoulou 2003, 170–71; 2008, 150–51; 2014, 20–8; 2016, 59–60; 2016–2017, 141; 2021, 185; Fig. 5b–c). Twenty small stone-built rooms were revealed within a massive fortification enclosure reinforced by five horseshoe-shaped bastions. The defense was strengthened by means of a possible outwork running along the western side of the fortification.

The end of the Naxian acropolis was violent. An impressive bronze spearhead (Fig. 6a) and a number of pebbles (slingshot projectiles), which were found in the wider area of the gate, amidst extensive traces of fire, are indications of the violent destruction of the fort after an enemy attack (Angelopoulou 2003, 171; 2014, 28–33; 2008, 150–51; 2016, 59; 2016–2017, 141; 2021, 186).

Panormos and Kastri share common features, especially regarding the organization of their defense system (Angelopoulou 2014, 65–7). Both sites are protected by a thick stone-built wall reinforced by horseshoe-shaped bastions and an outwork. Another common characteristic is the form of the entranceways, which are designed



Fig. 6: (a) Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos), bronze spearhead (Angelopoulou 2014, fig. 5.2); (b) Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos), triangular copper daggers (Angelopoulou 2021, fig. 6); (c) Korphari ton Amygdalion (Panormos), copper sword (Angelopoulou 2021, fig. 7).

as narrow passages guarded by flanking towers. Special care is also taken to protect the entrances from being visible from afar. At Panormos, the entrance to the acropolis is hidden by two massive tower-like structures (Towers Γ and Δ; Fig. 5c). In the case of Kastri, Tsountas notes that the entrance in the outwork was not easily visible from far away, as it was obliquely opened to the thickness of the wall (Tsountas 1899, 116–7).

Despite the common features discerned in the fortified settlement sites of the Kastri group period, Panormos represents a unique, so far, architectural form. At Kastri and Markiani, the fortification is built to protect an area occupied by a settlement. On the contrary, at Panormos the defensive wall is founded to protect not a settlement but a single building unit (Angelopoulou 2003, 171; 2008, 151; 2014, 511; 2016, 60; 2016–2017, 141; 2021, 186). The fortress on the summit of the hill might have served as a place of refuge in times of danger. Moreover, it was created to protect large quantities of agricultural commodities that were essential for the survival of the local community (Angelopoulou 2003, 171; 2008, 151; 2014, 511; 2016, 60; 2016–2017, 141; 2021, 186). It represents an outstanding example of collective work – a milestone in the evolution from small farming communities to more complex societies (Angelopoulou 2021, 186).

The citadel is an integral part of an extensive and as yet unexplored settlement extending on the slopes of the hill around the fort at the top (Angelopoulou 2008, 151; 2014, 67–8; 2016, 60; 2016–2017, 141; 2021, 186). The settlement was naturally protected by formations of bedrock that rises steeply high above the ground surface. These formations of bare rock protected the habitation area from being exposed to strong winds. At the same time, they provided additional protection against possible enemy attacks, as they obscured the view to the settlement and made access to the site difficult. Traces of walls made of large stones visible on the ground surface need to be further explored in order to address questions, such as whether there was an additional defensive wall that surrounded the settlement, as one might reasonably expect there to be.

While slings, the use of which is attested both at Panormos and Kastri, represent long-range weapons, others, such as daggers and spears, were designed for hand-to-hand combat. As aforementioned, in the acropolis of Korphari ton Amygdalion a bronze spearhead was found (Angelopoulou 2014, 454–57; Mastrotheodoros and Basiakos 2014, 460, 469–73; Fig. 6a). The spearhead is a sophisticated example of metalworking technique that reveals familiarity with advanced technology, especially the forging of weapons. Cast in a two-piece mould and subsequently hammered, the weapon has a solid, long and pointed blade. Sharp ribs extend along the entire length of the narrow blade, from tip to tang. The solid, hooked tang was inserted into a shaft, possibly, made of wood. The “Hook-tang” spearhead from Panormos has no counterparts in the Aegean. Similar examples of high quality, durable and effective weapons are known only from the East during the mid-third millennium BCE. Close parallels are found in spearheads from Troy (phase II), Ras-Shamra in Syria and Cyprus. The composition of the spearhead from Panormos, which is made of a copper-tin alloy (bronze) (Mastrotheodoros and Basiakos 2014, 460, 469) and its typological parallels indicate that the weapon was imported to Panormos from the East (Angelopoulou 2014, 454–56).

Panormos is also considered to be the provenance of an important group of thirteen bronze weapons (daggers and a sword) stored in the Archaeological Collection of Apeiranthos (Angelopoulou 2021; Fig. 6b–c). The artifacts are dated to EC II and represent a different metallurgical tradition compared to that of the spearhead. The objects must come from looted graves in the area of Panormos, as indicated by their excellent state of preservation. Noteworthy is that some of them have been deliberately “killed” by the blade being bent, a rare burial practice in the Aegean (Angelopoulou 2021, 183). A possible provenance for the aforementioned objects is the EC II looted cemetery at Korphari ton Amygdalion, located at the west slope of the hill and close to the acropolis (Angelopoulou 2014, 68–9; 2021, 186). Furthermore, the existence of the daggers is consistent with that of the fortress, as both indicate a period marked by heightened aggression and insecurity.

Weapons and especially daggers are considered valuable prestige items reflecting the high social status of their owner (Broodbank 2000, 253, fig. 83; Angelopoulou 2021, 182–83). They are multipurpose objects, useful in hunting and war, although they may also have been used domestically. The daggers from Panormos are, among their other possible functions, powerful short-range weapons (Angelopoulou 2021, 182–83, figs 5–10). With an average blade length of over 20 cm, they are effective weapons designed for melee combat. An example, whose length exceeds 35 cm, can be considered an early example of a real sword. As a rule, the examples are triangular in shape with a central rib, straight edges and a flattened heel. Rivets were used for the fastening of the handle made of perishable material (Fig. 6b). Noteworthy is that in the case of the sword (Fig. 6c) the impression of the wooden handle is preserved (Angelopoulou 2021, 181, fig. 9). Made in two-piece moulds, the daggers were further forged by hammering in order to obtain sharp and durable cutting edges.

Triangular daggers of similar type are particularly widespread in the Cyclades and are among the characteristic creations of the Cycladic workshop of metalwork during EC II (Branigan 1974, 124; Stampolidis and Sotirakopoulou 2011b, 55). The closest typological parallels for the examples of Panormos are known from islands such as Amorgos (cemeteries of Stavros, Dokathismata), Melos and Naxos. The similarities attested reinforce the possibility that the daggers from Panormos are creations of the Cycladic workshop during EC II (Angelopoulou 2021, 182).

An exception seems to be the dagger or knife (Angelopoulou 2021, 182, fig. 6, no. 903; Fig. 6b, no. 903), which –as in the case of the spearhead– echoes the metallurgical tradition of the East, where similar artifacts become particularly popular in Asia Minor during the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE. Apart from the metal objects imported, the close cultural affiliations of Korphari ton Amygdalion with the East are also evident in pottery with the discovery of Anatolianizing pottery types (tankards) (Angelopoulou 2014, 171–76, fig. 3.33), as in the case of Kastri, Markiani and Kynthos (MacGillivray 1980, 25, 45).

The acropolis of Panormos has considerably enhanced our knowledge of the strong cultural links with the East attested in material culture as well as in architecture. The citadel surrounded by a settlement recalls large EBA II settlements in Asia Minor, which are organized around fortified citadels that include public buildings

(Troy, Karatas-Semayük, Liman Tepe) (Mellink and Angel 1966, 245; 1970, 247; 1973, 294; Warner 1979, 137; Erkanal 1996, 78–80; 1999, 240–41; 2008, 182–83; Düring 2011, 284, 287).

The identity of the intruders who destroyed the citadels at Panormos and Kastri is and will remain unknown. However, it appears that the nature of the attacks was that of predatory raids, as both sites are abandoned after their destruction. The latter implies that the main aim of the attackers was to acquire the wealth that was kept inside the fortified areas. Thus, the destruction of the acropoleis could be interpreted as the result of a pirate attack (Angelopoulou 2008, 159; 2014, 512–13). Thucydides (1.4.1–8.3) states that piracy was a serious problem in the Cyclades until Minos, the mythical king of Crete, restored safe navigation by expelling the pirates and colonizing the islands. He also relates the rise of piracy to advances in maritime expertise and notes that early settlements on the coast were most vulnerable to pirate attacks and plundering. For that reason, people living on the islands and on the mainland preferred to settle at a distance from the sea.

Thucydides' comments are of vital importance for understanding the differences in settlement and growth patterns during the Middle and Late Bronze Age in the Aegean. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that piracy, closely connected with the intensification of maritime activities and the use of the longboats, had already become an acute problem for the islanders as early as the EBA. For example, it is probably no coincidence that the inhabitants of the fortified sites of the Kastri group period were prepared for an attack from the sea, as is implied by the location of the settlement sites close to but at a safe distance from the shores and on hills that command the sea routes leading to the islands. The fortified acropoleis of the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE are closely related to an era of increased threats and conflict, as implied by the developed war tactics, fortification systems and weaponry used. The root cause for the occurrence of predatory raids is a question to be answered. Nevertheless, an interesting scientific inquiry is whether the ascertained aggressiveness was related to climate factors such as aridity that might have affected agriculture and other aspects of social life in the Aegean during the last centuries of the 3rd millennium BCE (Jarriel 2020, 3–5, 10–1).

Creations of prosperous communities with an advanced social organization and an extensive network of external contacts, the Kastri group acropoleis are the continuation of the cultural tradition of the large unfortified settlements of early EC II, such as Skarkos, Dhaskalio, Ayia Irini and Chalandriani. At the same time, they probably foreshadow the developments at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, when the residential model in the Cyclades changes with the concentration of the population in fewer in number but larger in size settlements, which can be characterized as small towns, as, for example, Phylakopi on Melos, Akrotiri on Thera, Paroikia on Paros (Renfrew 1982, 38; Barber 1983, 77; Broodbank 2000, 326–31). Perhaps this change was necessary to deal more effectively with the dangers and instability in the Aegean (Angelopoulou 2016, 66–7; 2016–2017, 145), gradually entering a new era of cultural growth.



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Searching for Piracy in the Middle and early Late Bronze Age Aegean

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ABSTRACT

The investigation of piracy in the Middle and early Late Bronze Age Aegean is closely linked to contemporary maritime activity. In that context, the active incorporation of Crete, in the beginning, and then of the Greek mainland in the international eastern Mediterranean system established maritime networks and intensified communications and the circulation of goods among the aforementioned areas. In addition, the architecture of some contemporary coastal settlements, and particularly the presence of fortifications together with iconographic evidence indicate other-than-peaceful contacts as well. From this point up to the identification of piratical activity, however, lies a considerable distance. This paper examines this distance through different types of archaeological evidence. After outlining the major maritime networks in the Aegean of the Middle and early Late Bronze Age, the present work discusses material evidence and several case studies that have been interpreted as indicative for piratical activity, and which thus afford the evaluation of the phenomenon of piracy in the area and era under consideration.

INTRODUCTION

According to the definition that was introduced and adopted by the A.P.Pir.A. project, the term *piracy* refers to the seaborne robbery through some sort of ship, and also to the looting of a sunk ship even if this activity is taking place directly from the coast, both motivated by personal profit (Samaras, this volume). This paper is a brief review of the case studies associated with piracy in the Aegean of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) and the early Late Bronze Age (LBA), the Old and the New Palace period, and, also, the Final Palatial period, in Cretan or Minoan terminology. The challenge of exploring a series of case studies with the corresponding evidence is developed in three parts. The former roughly presents the context of maritime communications, the major sea routes and the dominant networks in the area and era under study. The second part reviews the actual case studies that have been interpreted as indicative for piratical activity by previous research – each one is established on a different sort of evidence, so that they provide the opportunity not only for an up-to-date consideration, but also for an evaluation. This is the subject of the final part, which explores in detail the best documented case study for identifying piracy, in order to conclude with a reassessment on piracy in the MBA and early LBA Aegean.

THE CONTEXT: MARITIME ACTIVITY IN THE MBA AND THE EARLY LBA AEGEAN

In the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE, during the MBA and the early LBA, initially Crete and afterwards the Greek Mainland witnessed the emergence of the political economies, which also affected the coast of western Anatolia, not to mention the islands of the archipelago. The establishment and the evolvement of the Minoan and the Mycenaean palatial systems were accompanied by the intensification of the maritime contacts between Crete and the Mainland with eastern Mediterranean and Egypt: the “maritime exchanges in the Mediterranean were rather limited in the earlier part of the 2nd millennium, and started to increase in the course of the 18th century BC only to evolve into a proper network for the circulation of metals, other raw materials and finished luxuries by the 17th century BC” (Papadimitriou and Krige 2016, 12). This integration of the Aegean into the eastern Mediterranean world system was analyzed, among others, through a tripartite model (Sherratt and Sherratt 1991, 358, 367–70): the early contacts in prepalatial Crete, with the exchange of low bulk raw materials for luxuries, were followed first by the adoption of life style and technology for the limited linkage with the network in the Old Palace period, and then by the actual participation in the period of the New Palaces; the latter presupposed the reorganization of the agricultural production in order to support manufacturing of the products that were necessary for the participation in the network, whether the growth and the increasing scale of contacts requested and forwarded products to the new periphery of the Greek mainland, in areas such as Laconia, Messenia and the Argolis, where the new centers of power were about to emerge.

Long before the transformation of the agricultural production, however, other transformations are evidenced in the fields of the settlement patterns and the ship technology with the employment of the sail, which further affect the maritime communications as well; it is worth exploring at some point how this shifting is related to the acquisition of raw materials and more particularly metals. Specifically, only one of the three prepalatial Aegean maritime networks survived in the period of the Old Palaces. Apart from the former that was developed in the northwestern Aegean with the coast of Macedonia and Thessaly, as also that of Euboea and central Greece, the second started from Aegina in the west and after crossing the Cyclades it reached the coast of western Anatolia to the east, while the third one included Crete and the Peloponnese through the settlement of Kastro on Kythera, according to the distribution of Middle Minoan (MM) IA pottery (Broodbank 2000, 351, 354, fig. 120). The second, horizontal network collapsed during the MM IB period, simultaneously to the foundation of the Old Palaces in Crete. There from, a dendritic network that was developed through the Cyclades in order to reach the Greek mainland, actually reflected the counter course of raw materials and particularly metals to the production centers of Crete (Broodbank 2000, 356, fig. 121). This network remained active during both the Old and the New Palatial period, with major stations initially in the Saronic gulf and later in the Cyclades and the Dodecanese, as it is mentioned below.

Apart for these interregional networks, maritime contacts in local scales are evidenced through, among others, the assemblages of three shipwrecks that are assigned to the period under consideration. The assemblage from the Minoan shipwreck at Pseira in the gulf of Mirabello is dated to the Old Palace period (MM IIB), according to the nearly 140 pots that comprised its cargo (Hadjidaki-Marder 2021), in their vast majority products from the surrounding area of the wreck, which “opens a new window into the nature of regional trade along the north coast of east Crete during MM II” (Nodarou 2021, 61). The assemblage recovered at Şeytan Deresi (Bass 1976; Margariti 1997), which included 17 complete and fragmentary vases that are assigned to the New Palace period, the Late Minoan (LM) I (Margariti 1998), is now interpreted as deriving from “a small, local craft capsized, spilled out its cargo and floated away” (Bass 2005, 31), so that the site is no longer considered as that of an actual shipwreck. The third shipwreck is different in nature and scale and it lacks any documentation, since its location is only indicated by the 19 Cypriot copper ingots from the sea area of Kyme (Svoronos 1906, 168–72; Sapouna-Sakellari 1984, 158, fig. 2b; Banou 1988; Stos Gale et al. 1997, 109–12), which are most likely assigned either to the New or even to the Final Palatial period, and they are therefore ideally combined in spatial and temporal terms with the Stafylos’ tomb on the island of Skopelos (Platon 1949).

The future research will contextualize the Pseira and Şeytan Deresi assemblages within the small worlds of the Mirabello gulf in eastern Crete and the Gökova gulf, immediately south of the Latmian gulf with the major site of Miletus (Tartaron 2013: 272–6). On the other hand, the Kyme find is rather situated in a branch of the aforementioned dendritic network, which established ports initially in the Saronic and later on in the western Cyclades, as it is mentioned below.

THE EVIDENCE: TIME UNITS AND CASE STUDIES

In the earlier and the middle part of the MBA, which roughly correspond to the period of the Old Palaces on Crete, the settlement at Kolonna on Aegina stands apart, first of all due to “the most impressive fortifications in the Aegean world after those of Troy” (Rutter 2001, 126; see also Gauss 2018, 52–6, figs. 5.4–5.6; 2019, 60–1, figs. 8–9, 66, figs. 13–15; Samaras forthcoming). The fortifications of Kolonna IX and a contemporary series of ship representations on matt-painted jars were considered indicative for the identification of the site with a “nest of pirates” (Basch 1986, 429). Although an earlier hoard of the Early Helladic III period with finds from different origins (Felten 2007, 15, fig. 5) is not opposed to that interpretation, and this is further the case for the also coming from Kolonna, later and possibly contemporary to Town X, “Aegina Treasure” (Higgins 1987; Simantoni-Bournia 2003; Fitton et al. 2009), Kolonna is currently understood as an outstanding residential center with an early elite. Minoan and Minoanizing pottery and a potter’s wheel, as also additional evidence, including among other a ceremonial stone hammer and a mason’s mark (Hiller 1993; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997; Gauss 2006), document the relations between the Kolonna and the Old Palatial Crete and even led to the hypothesis that the site might represent the earlier state outside Crete (Niemeier 1995).

The outstanding role of Kolonna in the MBA is also evidenced by the elite burial in the earlier so far shaft grave (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997; Rutter 1999), which produced the oldest assemblage of weaponry, jewelry and vases for drinking, pouring and transportation, an assemblage that is elaborated in the later shaft graves (Rutter 2001, 140). Furthermore, it is documented by the recent excavation of a monumental building with possible administrative character (Gauss et al. 2011; Tartaron 2013, 220). This evidence, along with the unprecedented distribution of Aeginetan pottery in the coast of Thessaly and central Greece, and also in the Saronic and the Argolic Gulfs, the Cyclades and Crete (Gauss and Knodell 2020), question the identification of Kolonna as a pirate nest. Instead, Kolonna, which is currently regarded as the core of the “small world” of the Saronic gulf (Tartaron 2013, 213), developed maritime activity that brought the latter closer to other, not-so-small worlds north- and mainly southwards. In that context, it is not surprising that at this site firstly the shifting of ship representations from the area of a mere symbol to that of an event or concept, likely associated with a narrative circle, is identified (Emanuel 2021, 132), and that at Kolonna the maritime activity is directly combined with warlike pursuits (Rutter 2001, 130), two fundamental elements in the composition of the identity of the emerging elites.

During the subsequent period of the New Palaces, the dendritic communication network that was based on Crete intensified its presence in the southern Aegean and more particularly in the connection of the Dodecanese islands with western Anatolia and the Cyclades with the Greek Mainland. Better documented are the sites developed along the western Cyclades, Akrotiri on Thera, Phylakopi on Melos and Ayia Irini on Kea (Davis 1979, 146), situated within a day’s sail of each other (Cherry and Davis 1982, 340). The presence of distinctive “Minoan” elements in several aspects of material culture and their implications on the corresponding social practices, including ritual, that was initially debated between the model of “Minoan” colonies and that of the indigenous process, has lately become the subject of more complex questions (Davis 2008, 202).

Minoanization, “the adoption in places beyond Crete through whatever means, of ways of doing things that originated directly or indirectly within this island” (Broodbank 2004, 46; see also Girella et al. 2016), was so intense in the case of Kythera that actually made that island indistinguishable from Neopalatial Crete, and this

was possibly also the case for Karpathos (Broodbank 2004, 69). In both instances the process left a clear imprint in the landscape. Although the presence of farmsteads with Minoanizing material culture is considered indicative of a “steady out-migration from Crete” (Broodbank 2004, 69), the future research will demonstrate if the transformation of the landscape in these islands signified the reorganization of agricultural production, as was also the case in the Cretan countryside, according to the aforementioned model of Andrew and Susan Sherratt (1991, 367–70). Needless to say that, if the Minoanized landscapes of Kythera and Karpathos indicate their actual incorporation to the system of Crete, alternative scenarios are mobilized for Thera and particularly Melos and Kea (Davis 2008; Niemeier 2009), whose countryside lack such evidence, although studied in great detail. Among these scenarios, and not opposed to the relation of maritime and warlike pursuits noted at Kolonna, is “power at a distance [...] probably exercised by a combination of elite linkage and the classic hegemonic strategy of violence, perhaps in the form of seaborne raiding, as witnessed in a West House wall-painting, the so-called Siege Rhyton from Mycenae, possibly the Knossos “town mosaic”, and earlier images on matt-painted pottery at Kolonna, rather than through the establishment of permanent control infrastructures and mechanisms to regulate tribute flow” (Broodbank 2004, 72).

This evidence advances the discussion toward issues of iconographic interpretation. The Knossos town mosaic (Foster 1979, 99–115; 2008, 178–79; Waterhouse 1994), the miniature frieze from the West House in Akrotiri (Marinatos 1973; Televantou 1994), the Siege Rhyton from Shaft Grave IV of the Grave Circle A at Mycenae (Sakellariou 1975; Papadopoulos 2019) and also the fragmentary steatite vase from the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas in Epidauros (Papadimitriou 1950, 194–210, fig. 10; Sakellariou 1971; Lambrinoudakis 1975, 172–73, fig. 149a) were initially considered as reproducing narrative compositions from the life in coastal towns, public gatherings in the cases of the MM and LM finds, instead of violent events in that of the early Mycenaean ones (Sakellariou 1981, 538). Although the former were enriched with the miniature frieze from the north-eastern bastion at Ayia Irini on Kea (Morgan 2020), the final publication of the miniature frieze from the West House in Akrotiri demonstrates beyond doubt the warlike aspects of the composition and establishes its direct associations to the Epidauros and the Mycenae rhyta (Televantou 1994, 331–38). Sufficient evidence supports that all three finds reproduce the same iconographic circle and could even refer to a single event (Televantou 1994, 331–33), which corresponds to coastal raids, including possible piratical activity (Morgan 1988, 153).

Regarding that Aegean “siege” iconography and particularly the Mycenae rhyton, however, which is recognized as reproducing a generic theme, it was plausibly questioned whether “the richly buried individual in Grave IV at Mycenae have ordered a precious item to be made for him showing nothing more than a piratical raid”, so that seaborne raids were rather interpreted in the context of the acquisition of goods and supplies (Papadopoulos 2006, 134–35; 2019, 409). In that direction, albeit through a more complicated course, also points the hegemonic strategy of violence that was mentioned above, which could generate genuine representations for reproduction in the period and the area under consideration. After all, the linkage between the aforementioned iconography and the Aegean elites is evidenced through both the specialized production centers and the consumption patterns of the finds themselves.

Therefore, the surviving iconography of the New Palatial period in the Aegean documents seaborne raids and the consideration of the nature of this assignment by the current research brings the discussion in the essence of the topic for identifying piratical activities. If piracy was an enterprise for the direct acquisition of personal profit, then it stands apart from the hegemonic strategy of violence, which, even without exercising, intended to control an area in order to secure regular flows; this conceptual distinction raises the question of whether it is possible to distinguish between these incidents and how the latter can be documented in the MBA and the early LBA Aegean.

Actual evidence for addressing this issue derives from the next time unit, that is the period after the destruction of the New Palaces and before that of Knossos, the Final Palatial period in Cretan terms, which demarcates the chronological limits of the present consideration as well. In that period, at the end of the Late Helladic (LH) II or early in the LH IIIA period, at the last quarter of the 15th or the first quarter of the 14th

century BCE, is dated the earlier, so far, reference to Mycenaeans in the Hittite archives. It is the often-cited text that is known as the “Indictment of Madduwatta” (Beckman et al. 2011, 69–100, *AhT* 3), that was dictated to a scribe by the Hittite king Arnuwanda I and refers to incidents that took place in the reign of his father, Tudhaliya I/II. The latter had installed Madduwatta in a kingdom of western Anatolia, possibly close to the area of Arzawa (Beckman et al. 2011, 98). The Hittite king reminds to his client ruler that, although he was rescued more than once from Attarissiya, a man from Ahhiya(wa), he then joined him and together with an unnamed ruler of Piggaya they raided Alashiya (Cyprus).

The incident is cited towards the end of the document *AhT* 3, in paragraph 36, and reproduces earlier correspondence, which according to Beckman (et al. 2011, 94–5) is translated:

[The report] of Mulliyara: “I gave [the tablet to Madduwatta (saying)]: His Majesty said thus [...]: ‘Because [the land] of Alashiya belongs to My Majesty, [and the people of Alashiya] pay [me tribute] – why have you continually raided it?’” But] Madduwatta said thus: “[When Attarissiya and] the ruler [of Piggaya] were raiding the land of Alashiya, I often raided it too. But the father of His Majesty [had never informed] me, [nor] had His Majesty ever informed [me] (thus): ‘The land of Alashiya is mine – recognise it as such!’” “If His Majesty is indeed now demanding back the civilian captives of Alashiya, I will give them back to him.” And given that Attarissiya and the ruler of Piggaya are rulers independent of My Majesty, while (you), Madduwatta, are a servant of My Majesty – why have you joined up with [them]?”

Madduwatta is accused by Arnuwanda for joining the two other individuals, since he is actually a client ruler to the Hittite king, in contrast to his allies who are independent (Gilan 2013, 53–4). Attarissiya concentrated a great deal of attention: this ruler or warlord of Ahhiyawa is generally recognized as a high-status Mycenaean and, although his role remains ambiguous, it is widely accepted that he was installed in western Anatolia and that he had a considerable fighting force at his command, which included infantry and chariots (Kelder 2004–2005). Also, a fleet or some sort of access to ships, according to his involvement in the raid on Alashiya, for which it is also argued that: “Such raids would be entirely consistent with the image presented in the Homeric epics of Mycenaean plundering enterprises conducted through the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean regions (and may well account for much of the wealth that was accumulated in the Mycenaean palace states). On this occasion, a Mycenaean warlord called Attarissiya, a ruler of Ahhiya, extended his military operations in western Anatolia to piratical raids off the southern Anatolia coast. Opportunistically, he appears to have coordinated his operations against the cities of Alashiya with his former enemy Madduwatta. Both benefited from the partnership.” (Beckman et al. 2011, 99).

THE REASSESSMENT: PIRACY IN THE MBA AND EARLY LBA AEGEAN

Attarissiya’s involvement in the raid against Alashiya is therefore considered a piratical action (Cesarano 2008, 41–5, 93) and deserves further exploration, even if its identification required the spatial expansion of the research area, in order to include Cyprus, and it further occurs in the expiration of the period under consideration. However, it is argued below that the main significance of the text for the assessing piracy in the early LBA Aegean lies not that much in Attarissiya’s involvement to the raid that caused the indictment of Madduwatta, as to that of the latter person. Moreover, that the evidence that derives from the reviewed text should be considered rather as analogical instead of direct.

First of all, it is safe to argue that the accusation by the Hittite king against Madduwatta for raiding Alashiya is established on two arguments. The former considers the claim that Alashiya was under Hittite control – although this was possibly not the actual case according to Beckman (et al. 2011, 99); the latter that Madduwatta was a client ruler and thus a vassal to the Hittite king. The very combination of these aspects renders the raid

against Alashiya a politically not acceptable military action, as far as Madduwatta is judged from the point of view of the Hittite king Arnuwanda. This, however, is not the case for the remaining two participants to the raid, the Mycenaean Attarissiya and the unnamed ruler of Piggaya, at least according to the existing evidence. In other words, this politically unacceptable action, which was meant to be signified as piratical in a later context, considers exclusively the client ruler to the Hittite king, and is not evidenced for Madduwatta's independent allies. In these terms, it can be assumed that this same event, the raid against Alashiya, likely represents piratical activity for one of the participants and an act of war for the remaining two.

The difficulty of distinguishing between war and piracy has already been noted and previous considerations on piracy in the Bronze Age Mediterranean in general and the Aegean specifically did not proven particularly fruitful. Baruffi (1998, 10) argued that, although "coastal raiding and piracy were also significant factors during the Bronze Age, as they have been during sporadic periods in the Mediterranean ever since. [...] war and piracy were so closely linked that it was not always clear when an enemy action was to be treated as one or the other". In the same vein, for the Aegean and for the periods before the composition of the Homeric poems and that of the poems themselves, de Souza (1999, 18) argued that "piracy is so closely related to warfare in both aims and methods that they are virtually undistinguishable" (see also de Souza 1999, 16, 21). This argument was debated, however, by Samaras (2015, 191), who introduced two key-points for distinguishing between the issues of war and piracy that puzzled Baruffi and de Souza: (1) while war is a political activity, piracy is an economic one, and (2) instead of the war's official aspect, piracy is rather an unofficial enterprise for personal benefit, so that "despite their resemblance, war and piracy are two entirely distinct concepts" (Samaras 2015, 191).

Returning to the aforementioned text and reviewing it under these principles, it is now demonstrated that the raid mentioned in the "Indictment of Madduwatta" actually represents the violation of the political status due to the economic motivation. Also, that this enterprise further violated the established official relations, a practice that even if not itself informal, lies out of the formal process. In these terms, the essential element that differentiates the perception and defines the nature of the event-raid is the relationships between the four LBA macro-agents, on the one hand, and with the subject of the raid on the other; the fact that both the accused, Madduwatta, and Alashiya were formally under the control of the accuser, Arnuwanda, while this was not actually the case for the remaining two participants, Attarissiya and the unnamed ruler of Piggaya. Therefore, the distinction between war and piracy in that case presupposed the consideration or even the reconstruction of the relationships among the involved individuals that was enabled by the surviving text.

Although the archaeological record of the MBA and the early LBA Aegean lacks such solid evidence and in order to retrieve it we had to turn eastwards, the field of the relationships is at least promising for the consideration of piracy. Here too, one or more dominant powers established special relations with a series of settlements, including nearly all the sites which yielded the evidence that supported the case studies previously discussed. It is therefore argued that the secure identification of piratical activity can be attempted through the reconstruction of relations among sites and, if possible, among individuals as well, while, if this consideration demonstrates the limitations of the archaeological record, then the sequel of the A.P.Pir.A. project might be developed as an interdisciplinary one.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous parts of this paper and following a brief presentation of the context of maritime contacts and networks in the MBA and early LBA Aegean, a series of case studies for piratical activity was critically discussed. It was argued that archaeological evidence previously interpreted as indicating piratical activity in the study area and era should be reconsidered. In the case of architecture, that the fortifications of Kolonna, even if combined with early ship representations, are currently understood in association to the site's outstanding role in the Aegean of the Old Palace period, where evidently the maritime element is for the first time in the period under

consideration associated with the martial one. In the case of the iconography of the period of the New Palaces, it was argued that, although it reproduces seaborne raiding events, the latter possibly indicate activities other than piracy. On the other hand, the textual case study of the Hittite record known as the “Indictment of Madduwatta”, not only produced evidence for the secure identification of a piratical event, but also demonstrated what was perceived as piracy by the LBA hierarchical societies and its close affinities with warfare. On the basis of this evidence, it was argued that particularly promising for the identification of case studies for piracy in the MBA and early LBA Aegean might similarly require the consideration and the reconstruction of relationships among sites and even among individuals, especially macro actors.

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Insecurity at Sea and the Fortified Sites of the 13th/12th centuries BCE on Crete

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ABSTRACT

The 13th/12th centuries BCE saw the appearance of large walled sites on Crete – a major change for an island previously distinguished by the scarcity of fortifications. The use of these sites was brief; therefore, they were the outcome of particular circumstances – those prevailing around the 1200 BCE collapse. This paper examines three fortified sites that are distinguished by their proximity to the coast, in order to determine if they aimed at countering seaborne raids or were established by groups that carried out such acts. Regarding Kato Kastellas, a site near the bay of Zakros, the topography is not suggestive of a pirate base. Kato Kastellas probably provided refuge to the inhabitants of the surrounding area – or to settlers that came from the sea. The fortified promontory of Elias to Nisi is near the defensible settlement of Vrokastro but does not seem to have served as its port. Instead, it was probably established earlier, possibly by people involved in sea raiding. The fortification on the island of Dia was hitherto dated to the Early Bronze Age; however, it should rather be placed in the 13th century BCE. Given the importance of Dia for seafaring and the concurrent decline of Knossos, the enceinte may tentatively be ascribed to bands of sea raiders who attempted to turn that island into a pirate base.

THE CLOSING STAGES OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE ON CRETE: A BLEAK TIME AND A DIFFICULT PLACE TO LIVE

The demise of the Mycenaean administrative centers at the transition from the 13th to the 12th century BCE resulted, *inter alia*, in significant changes in settlement patterns – namely, in the near abandonment of the coastal zones and a concomitant massive relocation to the interior, often at defensible sites (on the causes of the destructions and their outcome, see e.g., Dickinson 2006, 43–56; 2010; Middleton 2020; Maran 2022). The evidence from mainland Greece gives the impression of a sudden, largely unanticipated collapse. In the case of Crete, though, the relevant phenomena unfolded earlier and at a slower pace (Preston 2008, 318; Cunningham 2017, 389–90; Langohr 2017a, 24–5; Driessen and Gaignerot-Driessen 2023, 119, 125–26). Thus, the habitation of Palaikastro and Zakros, the main centers of the easternmost part of the island, ended at the close of Late Minoan (LM) IIIA or early in LM IIIB at the latest (Cunningham 2017, 355, 359, 373–74; Macdonald 2018, 322–23; Platon 2022a, 325; 2022b, 67–8). Further to the west, the occupation of coastal settlements continued during the first part of LM IIIB: Mochlos and Sissi were abandoned around the middle of the 13th century BCE (Soles 2008, 205; Langohr 2017b, 234–35), and the destruction of Malia also dates to this time (Driessen 2010, 567). Besides, the same century witnessed the decline of Poros and Kommos, the ports of the major centers of Knossos and Ayia Triada (Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2004, 378–79; Rutter 2017, 275, 278). More importantly,

in LM IIIB the administrative centers of the island were well past their heyday (see Preston 2008, 318; on Ayia Triada, see D'Agata 2017, 306). Only Kydonia retained its significance – but not necessarily for long, given that its palace was destroyed around the middle of this period (Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 196, 199).

In sum, the evidence suggests a decline, destruction and/or abandonment of the major centers of Crete – settlements with a long history that may have held a special significance for the inhabitants of the island. The abandonment of the coasts indicates pervasive insecurity at sea (Nowicki 2000, 224–25, 228; Langohr 2017a, 24). However, the threats did not affect solely this zone and tensions were not necessarily entirely exogenous – as is suggested by Kalamafka, a LM IIIB site of difficult access in the gorge of Aposelemis, which may have served as a hideout of bandits (Kanta and Kontopodi 2017, esp. 99–100; see also Driessen and Gaignerot-Driessen 2023, 125 – where a use as a refuge is proposed; nonetheless, the topography and the finds would not exclude a ceremonial use related to the initiation of young males and hunting). It is not entirely certain if the depopulation of the coasts was coeval with the establishment of defensible settlements at the interior. Nevertheless, the beginning of the latter phenomenon can indeed be placed in LM IIIB, given the presence of such pottery at the excavated sites (Cunningham 2017, 390; Langohr 2017a, 24–6). In any event, the profound transformations that occurred on Crete in the 13th century BCE can be regarded as a harbinger of the processes and events that resulted in the collapse of the core of the Mycenaean world itself – namely, of the palatial centers of the mainland – at the transition to the 12th century BCE.

THE FORTIFIED SITES OF THE 13TH/12TH CENTURIES BCE

One of the most intriguing aspects of the closing stages of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) on Crete is the appearance of large walled sites (on these, see Nowicki 2000, 226–27; 2011a, 363–64; 2011b, 439; Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 149, 158–63), given that in the preceding periods the island was distinguished by the scarcity or even absence of fortifications: apart from some walled settlements of the late Prepalatial period and the guard houses of the 1st half of the 2nd millennium BCE (Chryssoulaki 1999), proper fortifications were limited to certain sites resembling small fortresses (Nowicki 2011a, 355–56) and to the enceintes of centers such as Malia (Alexiou 1980, 17–9); these are few in number and only date to the Protopalatial period. The LM III walled sites are usually designated as *fortified citadels* or *acropoleis* (see Nowicki 2000, 41, 227; Kanta et al. 2021). These terms are misleading, as they imply that the sites were positioned next to urban centers – which was not the case (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 149 n. 2). Therefore, here the generic appellation *fortified sites* is used, since it is descriptive and hence does not predispose to a specific function.

Only nine such sites are currently known. They are restricted to the east half of the island, the only exception being Orne Kastellos (Fig. 1). Their topography varies. Thus, two sites are coastal, whereas the wall at Kophinas was built at the foot of the peak of the Asterousia range. Nevertheless, most sites were positioned at the confines of the coastal plains or hilly zones, keeping a safe distance from the sea. Many were placed strategically upon important land routes and/or near sea-lanes, and they all commanded a wide view of their surroundings – including the approaches to them. Interestingly, the sites were not positioned close to the urban and administrative centers of the 13th century BCE. The only exceptions were the fortifications on Mount Juktas, which loomed over the settlement of Archanes, and Elias to Nisi – a site in the vicinity of Gournia.

As a rule, the sites crowned isolated heights or abrupt slopes that were defined in part by cliffs. The protection of the sites relied to a large extent on their topography and morphology – that is, on the remote location, difficult access and steep ground. Fortifications were only erected at the sides that were relatively easy to reach. Their length varied from ca 100 m, at Krousonas Kastellas, to 490 m, at Juktas. The walls were articulated in straight segments, their thickness varying from 2.20 m, at Kastrokephala, to well over 5.00 m, at Elias to Nisi. In any event, they were stoutly built with boulders at the sides and a rubble fill in-between. Where needed, the latter was kept in place by cross-walls. In most cases, the fortifications represent simple enclosures. Thus, bastions

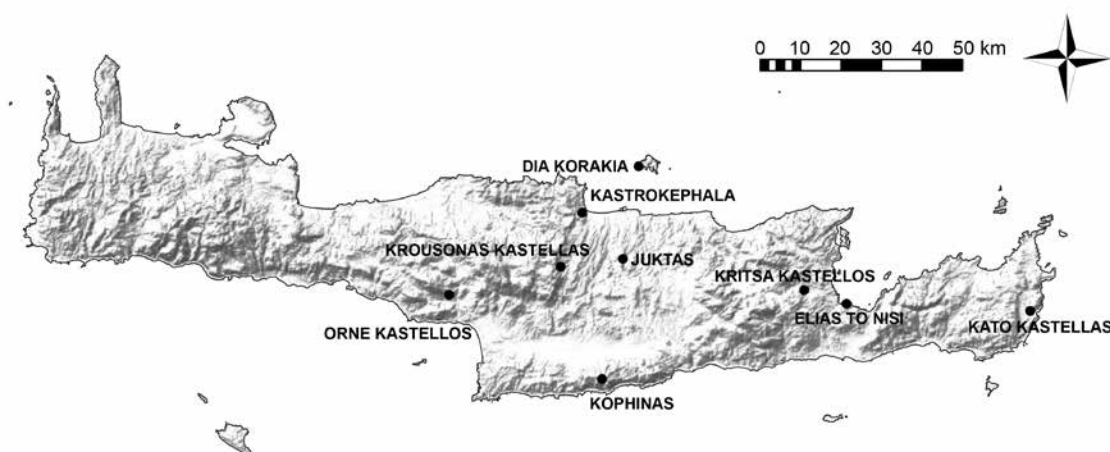


Fig. 1. Map of Crete, showing the location of the fortified sites of the 13th/12th centuries BCE.

are only attested at Kastrokephala, whilst the gates had the form of narrow openings in the walls. The enceintes lacked the offsets, corbelled galleries and elaborately arranged gates of the fortifications at the Mycenaean palatial centers. Consequently, they cannot be compared to them in terms of the sophistication of their planning or the work force required for their erection. Nonetheless, they followed the same principles in their construction and defensive logic, and they still constituted substantial undertakings.

The size of the sites ranges from ca 0.6 ha at Krousonas Kastellas to almost 11 ha at Elias to Nisi. However, not much weight should be placed in these differences, given that the extent of the walled areas was largely determined by the configuration of the ground. In contrast, of particular interest is the variation regarding the existence or not and the extent of building remains at their interior. Thus, large settlements developed at sites such as Orne and Kritsa Kastellos, whereas elsewhere traces of occupation are few – if present at all. In any case, even at the former sites a considerable part of the fortified area was not covered by buildings.

So far, excavations have only been carried out at Kastrokephala and Orne Kastellos. The available evidence suggests that both these sites were settled around 1200 BCE, only to be destroyed in the course of the first half of the 12th century BCE (Kanta 2014, 186; Kanta et al. 2021, 751, 755). Pottery of the LM IIIC period is attested at most sites. However, a LM IIIB date of some of them –or of their first use– should not be excluded (Nowicki 2000, 226–27; 2011b, 439; Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 163). All these “citadels” represent new installations. Together with the scarcity of building remains, this suggests that the fortifications were the first structures to be erected and, as such, they constituted the most essential element of the sites (Nowicki 2000, 226; 2011a, 363–64). In any event, their use was brief; actually, the evidence suggests that some sites were abandoned in the course of the construction of their walls or soon thereafter (for Kophinas, see Nowicki 2000, 46).

The fortified sites are usually discussed together with the defensible or “refuge” settlements, which constituted the dominant type of habitation at many parts of the Cretan landscape from LM IIIC until the Geometric period. However, in spite of the common features in their topography, the “citadels” clearly differed from these latter in terms of their small number, large size, scarce building remains, brief use and, last but not least, in the very presence of fortifications, whose scale is indicative of the complex realities of the Bronze Age rather than of the coming Early Iron Age (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 164–65). Consequently, they should be regarded as a distinct class, which was the outcome of specific historical circumstances – namely, of those prevailing on the eve of the collapse of 1200 BCE and in its aftermath. This being said, the differences between the individual sites imply that they did not necessarily serve the same needs (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 165–67). Given their size, the majority of them were possibly intended to become the principal centers of



Fig. 2. Kato Kastellas, the height and the fortification wall. Overall view from the northwest.

the respective regions – which did not eventually occur. However, others probably served as temporary refuges for the surrounding populations – or they eventually came to be used as such. Accordingly, the fortifications may have been commissioned by the authorities of the neighboring centers or by agents who only came into prominence in the course of this troubled transitional period – such as local functionaries, fallen nobles and their followers, former mercenaries and sea-raiders, or wandering groups of displaced people.

This paper will discuss three fortified sites that are distinguished by their proximity to the coast in order to determine the implications regarding the insecure conditions that apparently prevailed at seas – namely, their potential relation to pirate activities or intrusions from the sea. Accordingly, this study will examine if the fortifications aimed at countering these phenomena, or were erected by the perpetrators of such deeds.

KATO KASTELLAS

The site of Kato Kastellas is situated at the east end of Crete, at the interior of the gorge that exits at the bay of Kato Zakros. First explored by L. Mariani (1895, 294) during the initial stage of archaeological research on the island, the site has been investigated in the context of the survey carried out in the region of Zakros by the “Minoan Roads” research project (Vokotopoulos 1997–1998, 237–46, 248, 263–65; Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 158–63, 166. See also the discussion in Nowicki 2000, 46–8; 2018, 130).

Kato Kastellas represents an extreme example of a “fortified citadel”: The site occupies a tower-like eminence with precipitous sides, which is only joined to the north wall of the gorge by a low saddle (Fig. 2). Access to the top was barred by a fortification wall with a length of ca 280 m and a thickness of 3.80 to 4.40 m. This imposing structure was partly founded upon tall bedrock shelves, which added to its height. Halfway along its length opened two narrow gates; the one to the east was blocked early on, possibly in the course of the construction of the wall. One more gate was situated near the west end of the wall. Building remains only cover a small part of

the fortified area and are widely scattered. Thus, at the west end of the height, near its summit, stood an isolated building of ca 150 m²; another such structure was erected near the gates, whereas the walls at the south part of the site represent a larger, oblong edifice – or adjoining buildings placed in a row. Finally, a much smaller structure was situated at the east end of the height. All buildings had a rectangular shell and their size was substantial, with the exception of the easternmost one. Given that the site is not excavated, it is not clear if they represent dwellings, or served specific functions. In this respect, the building to the east may have been used as an observation post, given that it offers a wide view to the lower reaches of the gorge. Accordingly, the abundance of sherds from large pithoi around the building complex at the south side of the site implies that the storage of agricultural produce and/or water was a major concern. In any event, in terms of their size and regular form the buildings differed markedly from the small and simple, makeshift dwellings of the LM IIIA–IIIB settlement of Kato Zakros (see Platon 2022a, 323). The LBA pottery of Kato Kastellas is scanty and generally undiagnostic. Nevertheless, it is compatible with a dating in LM IIIC – although it is also probable that the site, or its initial use, dates to LM IIIB.

The mountains that flank Kato Zakros limit the view of the sea to the part extending due east. Furthermore, the bay itself cannot be seen from the site. The approach from the shore necessitates an arduous walk of about 45 minutes. The most convenient route –if there is any– climbs the foot of Mount Traostalos and then follows the north side of the gorge, before descending to the saddle. Alternatively, the saddle may be reached from the bed of the gorge, by climbing the talus slope to the west of Kato Kastellas or the equally steep ravine to its east.

The presence of a LM III fortified site near the bay of Kato Zakros, one of the few anchorages along the rocky east coast of Crete, is of a special interest since the historical trajectory of this part of the island was significantly affected by the sea (Chryssoulaki 2005, 84–5; Vokotopoulos 2007, 94). Thus, in the late Prepalatial period, small settlements were established upon the steep hills overlooking the bays of this coast, their defensible form implying an ambivalent stance towards the sea, which was evidently regarded as an area of opportunities as well as a source of threats (see Sackett et al. 1965, esp. 278; Tzedakis et al. 1999, 326; Vokotopoulos 2000, 134, 140; 2007, 38–9, 71). The Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods witnessed the rise of two urban and administrative centers, Palaikastro and Zakros, in spite of the fragmented terrain and limited arable land of this region or its distance from the powerhouses of central Crete. The importance of these settlements stemmed from the fact that they were positioned upon the sea route that linked the island with the east Mediterranean, constituting major ports of call (Platon 1974, 228; Viviers and Tsingarida 2014, 167); actually, the evidence suggests that in the late Neopalatial period Zakros served as the eastern port of Knossos (see e.g., Platon 1974, 228; Wiener 2007, 234–35; Vokotopoulos 2022, 61–2). In the 1st millennium BCE, the polities of Palaikastro and Zakros were succeeded by Itanos, one of the rare Cretan *poleis* whose *asty* was on the coast. As in the case of its predecessors, the economy of Itanos relied in part on maritime commerce and the city drew its wider significance from its placement on the route to the east Mediterranean (Viviers and Tsingarida 2014, 169–73), eventually becoming a Ptolemaic protectorate (Spyridakis 1970, 55–6). Itanos was deserted in the 7th century CE, in all probability due to the onset of the Arab raids (Xanthopoulou 2004–2005, 1027). Likewise, from the 15th until the late 18th century CE the wider region was largely abandoned and habitation was confined to the mountainous interior precisely because of the constant threat posed by piracy (Rackham and Moody 1996, 198–200; Vokotopoulos 2007, 15–6); this is confirmed by the accounts on the destruction of settlements (Noiret 1892, 520–21) and by the dense arrangement of the network of look-out posts that aimed at assuring the prompt response of the Venetian authorities in the face of pirate raids or of an Ottoman invasion (Arakadaki 1997, esp. 72, 74–5 figs. 1a–b, 80 fig. 2d).

In view of the above, the abandonment of the long-lived ports of Palaikastro and Zakros at the dawn of the 13th century BCE is suggestive of a major rupture in the history of Crete, since it implies a contraction of maritime trade, if not rising insecurity at seas. In this respect, of particular interest is the establishment of a settlement on the steep hill of Kastri, over the ruins of Palaikastro, towards the middle of LM IIIB (Sackett et al. 1965, 280–82; Cunningham 2017, 376–77, 386–87, 389). This site may represent a last attempt to maintain overseas connections. However, given that the defensible settlements of the closing stages of the LBA were normally

positioned inland so as to avoid the threats from the sea, the coastal location of Kastri would rather suggest that its inhabitants contributed to the insecure conditions of the period – either by providing a safe haven to sea raiders or by an active involvement in such activities (Nowicki 2001, 29; 2018, 135; Hitchcock and Maeir 2018, 5–6; Driessen, this volume). The same cannot be said of Kato Kastellas, though. Diachronically, pirate bases were positioned on defensible locations near major maritime routes, as was indeed the case of this site; however, pirates invariably chose places near the shore in order to strike timely any passing vessels and protect their own ships from attacks by their victims or rival parties (Samaras 2015, 192; Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 165). It is clear that Kato Kastellas did not meet these prerequisites (*contra* Hitchcock and Maeir 2018, 6; see also Nowicki 2001, 27). The opposite option, that of a fortress built not by outlaws but by a pre-existing authority – namely, a polity situated elsewhere on the island – so as to safeguard this remote region, cannot be accepted either: the regular form of the buildings does point in this direction, yet a military installation aiming to curb incursions from the sea would have to be placed on the bay itself.

It would then be more reasonable to consider the walling of Kato Kastellas as an outcome of both the volatile conditions at seas and the internal dynamics of this region. Thus, the site could have served as a refuge for the inhabitants of Kato Zakros in case of threat. Alternatively, it may represent an attempt of this community to resettle at a safer place without abandoning its ties to the sea (as suggested in Platon 2022b, 68). The above entail a construction of the fortification at the transition from LM IIIA to LM IIIB, much earlier than the establishment of the excavated sites of the same class. Such a dating should not be excluded, though, on account of the prevalence of insecure conditions well before the collapse of 1200 BCE (it should be noted that this view differs from that expressed in Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 166). However, it is still possible that the site was settled after the abandonment of Kato Zakros, in the course of LM IIIB or at the transition to LM IIIC. In the 13th century BCE occupation shifted to the hilly interior, and was in all probability scarce and dispersed. Therefore, in case of a late dating the site would have provided protection to these scattered habitations. A drawback of this hypothesis is that the access from the hinterland is only possible by crossing the bed of the gorge – the route any enemy coming from the sea would have followed to penetrate the area. Furthermore, it is doubtful if the remaining inhabitants of the region had the organizational capabilities and the means to erect the fortifications (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 166). Thus, another option would be that the site was founded by a group of immigrants, who decided to settle on this desolate height precisely because it was difficult to reach from the potentially hostile hinterland, but also due to its relative proximity to the sea – the route of escape, in case of failure of this endeavor.

In sum, the available evidence does not weigh in favor of one of the aforementioned hypotheses. In any event, the use of Kato Kastellas was brief, as is suggested by the small quantity of the pottery and the sparse architectural remains. In the course of LM IIIC, if not at its start, habitation was transferred to neighboring Lenika – a defensible site that was situated inside the same gorge, but offered easier access to the fertile hinterland (Vokotopoulos 1997–1998, 247–56, 263–69). As a result, this settlement proved to be more long-lived, lasting until the Geometric period or even beyond its end (see Vokotopoulos 1997–1998, 256; Platon 2022b, 68).

ELIAS TO NISI

The walled settlement of Elias to Nisi was investigated by the Vrokastro Survey Project (Hayden 2001; 2004a, 138–39; 2005, *Site Catalogue*, 24–6; see also Gaignerot-Driessen 2016, 305–6; Nowicki 2018, 132). The site is located at the south side of the gulf of Mirabello, to the west of Gournia – the most important center of the 2nd millennium BCE at this part of the island (for the LM IIIA–IIIB occupation, see Watrous 2012, 66–7; Watrous et al. 2015, 439–43; Gaignerot-Driessen 2016, 351–54). Unlike most other LM III “citadels”, it is situated on the coast – specifically, on a two-pronged promontory (Fig. 3). To its southwest rises the steep peak of Vrokastro – the site of one of the most extensively investigated LM IIIC–Geometric defensible settlements (Hall 1914; Hayden 1983; 2004a, 141–42; 2005, 184–86; see also Nowicki 2000, 107–9; Gaignerot-Driessen 2016, 308–11).



Fig. 3. Elias to Nisi, the east prong of the promontory. In the background, the west side of the gulf of Mirabello. View from the southeast.

Vrokastro was not the only such site in the area: in LM IIIC it was flanked by a chain of settlements, situated on the hills and ridges that oversee the coast (Hayden 2004a, 148–49, 153; 2005, 236). Elias to Nisi and Vrokastro are close to each other and intervisible (Fig. 4). Nevertheless, because of the difficult terrain, the climb from the promontory to the summit of Vrokastro requires about 40 minutes.

The sides of the promontory are precipitous. However, to the north a narrow cove is formed between its prongs, which can provide shelter to a few small vessels (Hayden 2001, 64 fig. 3, 69 fig. 6, 80). Across the neck of the promontory stretched a 350 m-long fortification wall. This structure was distinguished by its substantial width, which reaches 5–6 m. According to B. Hayden (2001, 70 fig. 7, 73; 2004a, 138, 360), its superstructure consisted of a series of box-like compartments that were filled with rubble. However, the walls separating the presumed compartments were not freestanding, since they only had one face; consequently, they represent mere cross-walls. It seems, therefore, that the enclosure at Elias to Nisi did not differ from those of the other LM III fortified sites in its construction and form (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 160). The LM IIIA–B sherds eroding out of the deposits upon which the wall was founded provide a *terminus post quem* for its erection in the 13th century BCE (see Hayden 2001, 68, 75–6; 2004a, 139). The most extensive traces of occupation are located at the east side of the promontory, above the cove, covering an area of 2.25 ha. The pottery suggests successive periods of use, a part of it dating to LM IIIC and the Early Iron Age (Hayden 2001, 66–8, 71; 2004a, 138–39). Building remains associated with LM III pottery were also detected at the west side of the promontory and on the highest point of the east prong; the latter seem to represent an isolated structure, possibly a watch tower since this spot offers a wide view to the coastline and the open sea (Hayden 2004a, 139; 2005, 24, 26).

According to B. Hayden (2001, 80–1; 2004a, 153, 155–56), Elias to Nisi and Vrokastro had a symbiotic relationship – that is, they complemented each other since they served different functions: Vrokastro constituted the main settlement, whilst Elias to Nisi served as the port of both that site and those in the surroundings. To this line of thought, the topography of Vrokastro indicates the prevalence of insecure conditions in the 12th century BCE, but these are only a part of the picture, the fortified port suggesting that the ties to the sea –and hence to the wider world– were actively maintained. Hayden (2004a, 139) did not exclude an occupation of Elias to Nisi for only a part of the year – presumably, during the sailing season.



Fig. 4. Elias to Nisi, the height of Vrokastro as seen from the site. In the foreground is the fortification wall. View from the north/northeast.

It is difficult to reconcile this view with the existence of the enclosure, though: if nothing else, this would have necessitated the constant presence of a garrison to prevent the seizure of the port by enemies. As the closest parallels to this dual settlement system, pairs of sites representing the *asty* and port of specific Cretan *poleis* were cited, such as Lato and Lato pros Kamara (Hayden 2004a, 155–56). However, the ports were later additions, since they only developed in the Hellenistic period – an extrovert time, during which the economy and politics of the Cretan *poleis* became increasingly tied to the affairs of the wider Aegean and Mediterranean worlds (Coutsinas 2011, 247–48). Accordingly, the modern ports of many Aegean islands appeared much later than the main settlements, which were usually positioned on defensible locations further inland: the development of the coastal settlements went hand-in-hand with the rise of interregional maritime commerce and the suppression of piracy. In contrast to the above, the 12th century BCE did not represent a time of widening horizons but of political fragmentation, instability and decline. Consequently, the hypothesis of an upper and lower settlement system does not seem credible. Besides, given the manifestly insecure conditions of the period, the split into two nuclei of habitation would not have enabled an effective response in case of attack; the walling of the port but not of the main settlement would not make much sense either.

It would be more reasonable to assume that, instead of being complementary, the two sites expressed different realities and contrasting dynamics. In this regard, it is probable that they were not founded simultaneously. One option would be that Elias to Nisi was established later than Vrokastro, during the brief revival of the middle stage of LM IIIC, representing an attempt by the inhabitants of the latter site to resettle near the sea in order to take advantage of the rise in maritime circulation. However, such a venture would have been particularly risky, given that conditions remained unstable; hence, it is not likely to have occurred. Given that the size of the fortification points to the realities of the period before the collapse, it is more probable that Elias to Nisi was the first site to be established. The earliest activity on Vrokastro may date to the close of LM IIIB, yet occupation only started on a significant scale at the onset of LM IIIC (Hayden 2004a, 127, 149). Therefore, the fortification of Elias to Nisi should be dated to the 13th century BCE or around the transition to the 12th century BCE at the latest.

In theory, the walling of Elias to Nisi could have been an initiative of neighboring Gournia. In the Final Palatial period, this settlement retained the status of an administrative center (Watrous 2012, 66–7; Watrous et al. 2015, 443). However, only a fraction of the site was reoccupied after the LM IB destructions (Watrous 2012, 66). Moreover, survey evidence indicates that its hinterland was depopulated (Hayden 2004b, 235; Haggis 2005, 79–81; Watrous 2012, 65–6); it is even probable that this phenomenon became more intense in the 13th century BCE, given that in the area of Vrokastro, at least, LM IIIB is elusive (Hayden 2004a, 133). It is therefore doubtful if this center could provide the resources and the workforce for the construction of the wall at Elias to Nisi; besides, if the need was felt to protect the population, one would have expected the authorities to fortify Gournia itself. Accordingly, it is difficult to envisage the enclosure as a collective undertaking of the communities of the area: The LM IIIA–IIIB sites in the surroundings were small to begin with (Hayden 2004a, 132–33), and the dominant trend in the 13th century BCE was the relocation to the interior, not the foundation of new settlements upon the shore (on the scarcity of LM IIIA–IIIB coastal sites in the area of Vrokastro, see Hayden 2004a, 149; 2004b, 238 fig. 17.5). In this regard, it is not without interest that Elias to Nisi was relatively easy to access from the sea but not on the landward side, due to the presence of the cove and the fortification, respectively.

In view of the above, it would be reasonable to assume that the people who occupied this site differed from those inhabiting the surroundings in terms of their background and occupations. In other words, they were probably incomers and/or bands of locals that viewed the turbulent conditions reigning at sea as an opportunity rather than a problem, making their living by plundering the coasts of Mirabello and by preying upon the ships sailing along the route that joined north-central Crete with the east Mediterranean (Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 165; see also Nowicki 2001, 31; Hitchcock and Maeir 2018, 6). An involvement of the inhabitants of Elias to Nisi with piracy was proposed by Hayden (2004a, 139) as well, who also considered the increase in settlement during LM IIIC as indicating the influx of a new population in the area – namely, the Dorians (Hayden 2004a, 155; 2004b, 240). This was regarded as having occurred gradually, starting in late LM



Fig. 5. Dia, the cove of Ayios Georgios and the promontory of Korakia as seen from the highest part of the latter. View from the west/northwest.

IIIC and the Subminoan period – the time of the appearance of corbel-vaulted tombs and cremations. However, the major rupture signaled by the walling of Elias to Nisi may indicate that this phenomenon was initiated much earlier, towards the close of the 13th century BCE.

KORAKIA

The last case to be examined concerns the enceinte at the west end of Dia, an island situated off the north coast of central Crete. This site has not been included among the LM III “citadels” thus far, given that it is considered to be earlier in date. The fortification was detected by C. Kritzas, in the course of the underwater survey he carried out together with J.-Y. Cousteau (on these investigations, see Kritzas 1988a; 1988b, 10–1), and was first discussed by S. Alexiou (1980, 19–20) in his seminal study on the “acropoleis” of Prepalatial and Protopalatial Crete. Previously, A. Evans (1921, 298) had noticed “blocks of an early wall close to the sea” at this part of the island; however, he also mentioned the presence of terraces and level areas on the upslope side, which implies that he did not refer to the fortification (contra Alexiou 1980, 20); instead, these remains should be ascribed to the habitation of the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE that extended to the northeast (see Kopaka 2012, 438, 447, 449). The site has recently been reinvestigated in the context of the surface survey conducted on Dia by the University of Crete (Kopaka 2012, 446–47, 453).

The fortification wall is situated on Korakia, the rocky promontory that defines from the west the sheltered cove of Ayios Georgios – one of the four embayments formed at the south side of Dia (Figs. 5–6). The promontory is in effect a steep slope that rises to the west and then drops into the sea forming a sheer cliff. The inclination of the ground is smoother only at the tip of Korakia. The wall extends across the promontory on an east–west axis (Kopaka 2012, 446, 460 figs. 14–5). Just before reaching the edge of the cliff, though, it turns to the northwest, stretching along the bedrock outcrops that rise over the precipice, and then makes an abrupt turn to the west,



Fig. 6. Korakia, the promontory and the fortification wall. Satellite image (modified from Google Earth).

ending at the top of Korakia (Fig. 6). The changes in direction evidently aimed at including this specific spot in the enclosed area, since it offered a wide view to the coast of Crete and the open sea. The fortification, whose preserved length reaches ca 250 m, consisted of straight segments built in the megalithic technique, with large blocks at the faces and a rubble core (see Alexiou 1980, 20, pl. 8; Kopaka 2012, 446). The width of the wall is 2.70 m on average. A widening at about the middle of its length may indicate a gateway; this would have been a narrow passage, formed between two parallel segments of the wall. To the east, an oblong structure extends along the inner side of the fortification. This may represent a buttress or –what is more probable– a staircase that led to the battlements. The abundance of pottery at the highest part of Korakia suggests intense frequentation, yet architectural remains are apparently lacking (Kopaka 2012, 447) – a picture which is compatible with a use of the area as a lookout. Near the probable staircase are two contiguous rooms or small buildings that abutted on the wall. Apart from them, no buildings seem to have existed within the enclosed area. Nevertheless, the presence of a nucleus of habitation at the end of the promontory should not be excluded, given the relatively thick deposits extending around the modern chapel of Analipsis (see Kopaka 2012, 466 fig. 29).

On the basis of surface pottery, Alexiou (1980, 20) surmised that the fortification is Prepalatial in date; furthermore, he stated that the wall was related to the prehistoric fortifications of the Aegean, citing those of the Cyclades as examples. The ascription to exogenous influences or agents is not quite what would have been expected, given that this view was expressed in a study aimed at deconstructing the myth of the peaceful nature of Minoan civilization by providing the first systematic discussion of the defensible sites of the Cretan Bronze Age. It may be guessed that Alexiou came to this conclusion due to the location of Dia between Crete and the Cyclades, and also because the sites he studied largely lacked defenses. Besides, the fortifications of Prepalatial Crete known to this scholar did not resemble that of Dia in their form and size (see Alexiou 1980, 11–3). It is nevertheless surprising that he did not notice the similarity of Dia's wall with the one of Juktas, dated by himself to LM III, even though this latter was discussed in the same paper (Alexiou 1980, 14). The dating to the Early Bronze Age (EBA) was retained by K. Kopaka (2012, 446 n. 15, 453), who explicitly referred to a connection with the Cyclades.

In the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE, the links between Crete and the Cyclades were strong: the islands provided obsidian and metals, as well as valued goods such as liquids transported in jars or marble figurines, eventually exercising considerable influence on Crete (Wilson 2008, 82–3, 89–90, 98–9). Given that seafaring and trade were of crucial importance to the EBA Cyclades, it is fairly probable that the movement of these products was largely carried out by the islanders (Wilson 2008, 90, 99). Dia would surely have been used as a stepping stone during these voyages, providing respite and fresh water to the crews of the longboats (see Kopaka 2012, 437–38). However, in spite of the evidence for Cycladic settlement elsewhere on Crete in Early Minoan (EM) I (see Wilson 2008, 82, 86–7), it is hard to envisage such an installation on Dia. If nothing else, the main gateway for the goods from the islands was situated on the coast opposite Dia, that is at the port of Poros, as is indicated by the substantial quantity and variety of the Cycladic or Cycladizing products at this site (Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki et al. 2007, 88–92, 94; Wilson 2008, 82–3, 89–90). Furthermore, the intensity of the contacts suggests that the relations between the islanders and the inhabitants of Crete were largely amicable. Consequently, a fortified outpost on Dia would have been superfluous.

The earliest Cycladic fortifications date to the Final Neolithic (Televantou 2008, 44–5), whilst in the EBA walled settlements abounded on the islands (see Doumas 1990, 92; Marangou 1994, 471–72, 475–76; Sotirakopoulou 1997, 536; Angelopoulou 2014, 20; 2016–2017, 145). With the exception of Markiani, though, whose fortifications were constructed in Early Cycladic (EC) I and early EC II (Marangou 2006, 84, 86–7; Renfrew 2006, 248), the excavated sites belong to late EC II (Angelopoulou 2016–2017, 139) – that is, they postdate the intensive interactions with Crete, whose heyday is placed in late EM I and EM IIA (Wilson 2008, 82, 90). Besides, the fortified sites of the Cyclades were densely occupied, whereas at Korakia building remains are scarce – if present at all. In any event, the enceinte of Dia differed significantly from those of the islands (for the morphology and construction techniques of Cycladic fortifications, see Bossert 1967, 57–8; Marthari 2017, 65 [Kastri]; Plassart 1928, 14, 16–7; MacGillivray 1980, 4, 7 [Kynthos]; Angelopoulou 2014, 20, 27, 65–6 [Korphariton Amygdalion]; Marangou 2006, 81–6 [Markiani]). Thus, it did not have bastions or an outwork, features that were typical of EC fortifications (Angelopoulou 2014, 65–6). On the other hand, it was more massive, given that in the Cyclades curtain walls were as a rule thin – not more than 1.70 m in width (see Bossert 1967, 57; Marangou 2006, 81 n. 11; Angelopoulou 2014, 20). The probable fortification wall at Spedos was slightly thicker, reaching 1.90 m: see Renfrew et al. 2022, 23–4). Last but not least, the enceinte of Dia represents a much larger undertaking than the Cycladic fortifications, whose walls did not exceed a length of about 70 m (see Bossert 1967, 57; Marangou 2006, 81) – much less than at Dia. In sum, the presumed Cycladic connections of the enceinte on this island are not confirmed by the available evidence: the wall does not belong to the same tradition as the EC fortifications and was not influenced from them either; therefore, it cannot be ascribed to sea-traders or settlers originating from these islands, or to Cretan masons following the relevant prototypes. Accordingly, the wall does not resemble the early fortifications of Crete, given its large size, but also because of its megalithic walling and arrangement in straight sections – features not attested at Prepalatial walled settlements (for such sites, see Vokotopoulos 2000, 139–40; Alusik 2016, 55). Consequently, a dating to the EBA is highly improbable.

A more plausible hypothesis would be that Dia was fortified in the Middle Ages. Specifically, the wall may have been built after the establishment of the Emirate of Crete, in the context of the successive attempts of the East Roman Empire to retake this island. After all, Dia is mentioned repeatedly in the relevant sources. Thus, the island provided refuge to Photeinos, co-leader of the first campaign, after the defeat of the Byzantine army (Makrypoulias 1999–2000, 348), while in the expedition of 949 CE Dia served as the last stopover of the Byzantine fleet on the route to Chandax – and the same must have been the case before (Christides 1984, 176; Chaniotis 1992, 125; Makrypoulias 1999–2000, 361; Yannopoulos 2011, 164). Furthermore, according to the *Life of Athanasios Athonites*, in the final campaign of 960–961 CE the island was used by the fleet of Nikephoros Phokas as a bridgehead before attempting the landing near Chandax (Christides 1984, 178). Besides, it may be surmised that during the ensuing siege the coves of Dia were used as anchorages by the dromons, which, according to Leo the Deacon, patrolled the sea so as to enforce a naval blockade (Theodosius Diaconus 2017, 11). If nothing else, the importance of Dia is confirmed by the significant quantity of Middle Byzantine pottery

yielded by the excavation of Cousteau and Kritzas in the cove of Ayios Georgios (Kritzas 1988a, 9). Thus, if the fortification dates indeed to the time of the last campaign, it would have aimed at securing the grip on Chandax, as well as at preventing a seizure of Dia by reinforcements to the besieged.

The fortifications that covered temporary or unforeseen needs, such as those constructed by armies camping in enemy territory or populations facing invasions, were usually makeshift and simple in form (Fachard 2016, 220–21; interestingly, the interior of such enceintes is often largely empty – as is the case of the site under consideration). As a result, their construction technique and morphology may deviate considerably from the norms of the relevant periods. By way of example, at Kastro tou Lazarou, a refuge settlement of the 7th century CE perched on one of the highest peaks of Samos, the fortification is a mere rubble enclosure, the absence of towers or elaborately arranged gates implying that it was constructed hurriedly – most probably, in the face of the first Arab raids (Tsakos 1979, 11, 13–4, 16–20). In the case of Dia, a hasty construction may explain the absence of towers or the fact that no mortar was used as a binding agent, yet it cannot account for the complete lack of the characteristic traits of Byzantine fortifications. Thus, where the wall changes direction it does not follow an arched course; instead, its sections join at obtuse angles. Accordingly, it is much thicker than the usual Medieval fortifications of the same scale. Furthermore, the masonry is megalithic. Last but not least, the wall is well-built – in other words, it was not erected under pressure. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned features are typical of the Cretan fortifications of the 13th/12th century BCE, as is the scarcity of building remains in the enclosed area. Consequently, the wall on Dia may well date to the later part of the Bronze Age. This is a working hypothesis, given the apparent lack of LM III pottery, but on the basis of the available evidence it can be considered as the most reasonable guess. Specifically, the erection of the fortification may be regarded as the outcome of the strategic location of Dia and the dynamics created by the interplay between the political situation at the interior of Crete and the unsettled conditions at sea in the 13th century BCE.

Dia is a small island with few, infertile arable areas, and freshwater is scarce (Chaniotis 1992, 126; Kopaka 2012, 435, 441–42, 444–45). Nonetheless, and in stark contrast to the exposed and inhospitable north coast of Crete, its coves provide safe anchorage since they are protected from the northerlies (Evans 1921, 298–99; Kritzas 1988a, 8). Moreover, Dia faces the ports that served Knossos, the hegemonic center on Crete during most of the 2nd millennium BCE, and then the successive incarnations of the capital of the island, from Raddh el-Khandaq to modern Herakleion. Consequently, in the past Dia was of particular importance for navigation as well as for the control of the opposite coast and, by extension, of the whole of Crete (Kritzas 1988b, 10; Chaniotis 1992, 125; Theodoulou et al. 2015, 622–23). Thus, this islet played a role in events of a major significance for the history of Crete: apart from its use during the Byzantine reconquest, Dia harbored the French fleet that attempted to help Candia at the last stage of its siege by the Ottoman army, and the squadron of the great powers of Europe that imposed the autonomy of Crete from that empire. Besides, the island intermittently served as a pirate lair, whilst in early Modern times it was used as an anchorage by large merchant vessels (Kritzas 1988a; Chaniotis 1992, 125–26). The proveditors and engineers of the *Serenissima* were conscious of Dia's importance since they repeatedly stressed the necessity of fortifying the island, but to no avail (Chaniotis 1992, 126). Evidently, they were not the first to envisage such a project.

The survey of Dia has determined the presence of sites dating to the Middle Bronze Age, but the evidence for the later stages of the 2nd millennium BCE is currently scarce, or elusive (Kopaka et al. 2022, 223; on the periods of use, see also Kopaka 2012, 451–52). This is intriguing, at least as far as the early Neopalatial is concerned – a time of intensive exploitation, if not dense occupation, of even the most marginal areas of Crete (see Driessen 2001, 54 fig. 4.2, 59, 63). A Minoan habitation site, whose use may have spanned many periods, was on the shore at Ayios Georgios (Evans 1921, 298; Kritzas 1988a, 8; Kopaka 2012, 449) – as it might have been expected, since that cove always served as the main harbor of Dia (Kopaka 2012, 449–50; Theodoulou et al. 2015, 621). However, a substantial settlement such as those on the islets of Pseira and Chryssi (Betancourt 2012, 3–7; Brogan et al. 2019) does not seem to have existed on Dia, in spite of its larger size. In light of the above, an occupation during the Final Palatial period and especially in LM IIIB should not be taken for granted, given that the hinterland of Crete was rather thinly settled (Driessen 2001, 59–60, 64). If any habitations existed during that time, they must

have been both few and small – that is, their occupants would not have been numerous enough to build and then man the fortification of Korakia. It can therefore be conjectured that the erection of this wall was due to an external intervention – as is normally the case with outsized or elaborate defensive works on small, poor and/or sparsely settled islands, given that they cannot provide the resources for such undertakings (Bevan and Conolly 2013, 191). In other words, the purpose of the enceinte was not the protection of the inhabitants – if there were any – but the control of the cove of Ayios Georgios and of Dia itself.

In theory, this initiative could be ascribed to Knossos. In that case, the fortification would have aimed at preventing the occupation of Dia by hostile forces, such as sea raiders or the army of a rival polity. However, this hypothesis presupposes that in the 13th century BCE Knossos was still a major palatial center, which is far from certain (see e.g., Preston 2008, 310–11, 316; Hatzaki 2017, 71–2, 74; Driessen and Mouthuy 2022, esp. 73–5; Whitelaw 2022, 38–49). The surface survey of the valley of Knossos determined a drastic contraction of the city in LM IIIB; nonetheless, Knossos was still one of the most extensive urban centers in the Mycenaean world (Cutler and Whitelaw 2019, 15–8; Whitelaw et al. 2019, 7–8). Due to this, and by tentatively accepting an early LM IIIB date for the latest Linear B tablets, T. Whitelaw (2022, 41, 46–7) concluded that Knossos remained an important administrative center, whose control extended over large parts of central and western Crete (for a similar view, see Driessen and Mouthuy 2022, esp. 75, 79; but see also Driessen and Gaignerot-Driessen 2023, esp. 126–27). However, the excavations suggest anything but a flourishing city: habitation was scattered and usually took the form of a partial reoccupation among the ruins of earlier mansions, whilst newly constructed dwellings were simple and poor (Hatzaki 2004, 125; 2005, esp. 75–6, 91). In other words, the picture of LM IIIB Knossos resembles that of the other centers of Crete in the reoccupation phase after the LM IB destructions (see e.g., Preston 2008, 314; Vokotopoulos 2019, 469). Admittedly, the excavations have been largely restricted to the core of the site, but they should be regarded as being representative of the whole, given that the investigations at its port yielded similar finds (Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2004, 378–79). Besides, the decrease in the number and wealth of tombs is also consistent with a severe recession (Hatzaki 2017, 73). In sum, even if it is to be accepted that parts of the palace of Knossos were in use and archives were still kept in the first stages of the 13th century BCE, the wider picture indicates that, as stated by E. Hatzaki (2004, 125), this center was but a mere shadow of its former self. This is also suggested by the fact that no attempt was made to rebuild the palace on a grand scale after the LM IIIA2 destruction (see Whitelaw 2022, 44, 49). Knossos continued to tax its subjects, if only by default, and might have expected tribute from more distant centers – even though these would have been largely independent at that time. However, economic exploitation is not equal to military might. Consequently, Knossos may not have been able to control its territory effectively, much less to defend it (see Driessen and Mouthuy 2022, 78–80 – where a contraction of the territory of Knossos and a simplified administrative apparatus are proposed for early LM IIIB); accordingly, it is doubtful if this center could commission large defensive works as the wall on Dia. Besides, this would apply even more for the later part of that century, when Knossos was in steep decline (on the palace, see Whitelaw 2022, 49; on the lack of Linear B deposits, see Driessen and Mouthuy 2022, 75 table 1).

If the enceinte was not built by Knossos, or a lesser center of the wider region for that matter, then those who undertook this project may not have represented an established authority. Specifically, and in view of the evidence for turmoil at seas, it can be surmised that in the later part of LM IIIB and at the transition to LM IIIC Dia became a lair for bands of pirates or freebooters, who ambushed the ships heading to Poros and plundered the plains and valleys of the north coast of Crete – areas that were rich, but without strong centers to protect them. These groups may have been large and well-organized, as were those that wreaked havoc in the east Mediterranean at that time. Thus, and provided that their raids were indeed profitable and systematic, they may have eventually decided to fortify the promontory of Korakia so as to turn Dia into a permanently occupied pirate base (in this regard, see Jung 2018, 280 – where the presence of Sea Peoples' strongholds on Crete is considered probable; see also Bevan and Conolly 2013, 196 – where the existence of large fortifications on small, barren islands is proposed as one of the material signatures of piracy). If this was the case, the wall could be dated to late

LM IIIB – the time of the destruction of Poros by fire (see Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2004, 379), when even Knossos may have been temporarily abandoned (Hatzaki 2004, 125; 2005, 86–7).

However, it seems that the site never became a proper settlement. In this regard, it is of interest that the enceinte is preserved to a height of four courses at most (Kopaka 2012, 446) and the rubble from its collapse is not extensive. The above may imply that the superstructure of the wall was built with mudbricks – but this is unlikely: The preparation of the mudbricks would have necessitated a considerable amount of water, which does not abound in Dia. Thus, the evidence would rather suggest that the erection of the fortification was not completed – as was the case at Kophinas. Besides, a brief use is indicated by the scarce building remains.

It appears, therefore, that the attempt to occupy Dia on a permanent basis was eventually abandoned – either due to the limitations imposed by the arid and barren landscape or because there was not much left to sack on the opposite coast, whereas raiding at other regions of the Aegean or the east Mediterranean may have seemed more lucrative. Alternatively, the bands that used Dia as a staging area may have decided instead to settle on Crete itself once they had formed a precise picture on its topography, the fertility of the land, and the limited capability of the inhabitants to resist their attacks (on previous knowledge of the targeted areas as a significant factor in phenomena such as incursions and population movements, see Anthony 1990, 899–904; Jung 2009, 79; 2018, 273–74). Such a turn of events is suggested by the example of Kastrokephala – a site placed at the west end of the coastal plain opposite Dia: the material culture of this fortified 'citadel' is largely Minoan in character (Kanta and Karetso 2003, 152), but is also distinguished by strong Helladic and Italian connections; according to the excavators, this implies that Kastrokephala was founded by groups originating from these regions.¹ In any event, the standardized form and regular arrangement of the buildings indicate a conscious effort to homogenize a diverse population, which implies that the incomers were regarded as a constituent part of the nascent community – if they did not hold an important position, indeed (see Vokotopoulos and Michalopoulou 2018, 167).

CRETE, PIRACY AND THE FORTIFIED SITES OF THE 13TH/12TH CENTURIES BCE

Piracy is a varied and adaptable phenomenon, which according to the circumstances appears in different forms regarding its intensity and range, or the motives, organization and origin of those actively involved (see e.g., Bevan and Conolly 2013, 187–89). Geography defines the coastal zones and landscapes best suited to piracy (Hitchcock and Maeir 2018, 4–5), but does not predetermine the role(s) of their inhabitants (Bevan and Conolly 2013, 193–95). Thus, the same regions may alternately constitute pirate nurseries or the preferential targets of sea-raids. For example, the flourishing of the small and rocky island of Antikythera in the Hellenistic period was largely because it became a pirate base (Bevan and Conolly 2013, 189–92). Conversely, this strategically placed island witnessed successive episodes of abandonment from the 7th century CE onwards; these coincide with periods of insecurity at seas, which suggests that the inhabitants became the victims of pirate

1 Kanta and Kontopodi 2011, 130–33. Among the relevant finds, of particular interest are two locally made carinated cups of sub-Apennine type. The presence of these vases could be ascribed to their exotic associations. However, given their rather simple form and the lack of painted decoration, it is unlikely that they were viewed as prestige items; instead, it is more probable that the people who used them were accustomed with the relevant sympotic practices, if they did not come from Italy itself. Also significant is the substantial presence of built hearths of Mycenaean type, and of cooking vessels belonging to the LH III ceramic tradition: since cooking techniques are embedded in wider cultural patterns, they are not particularly susceptible to change – as opposed to consumption practices, which provide a more direct reflection of social dynamics; consequently, the sudden appearance of exogenous habits in food preparation may well indicate the presence of migrants (see e.g., Jung 2011, 69). In the case of Kastrokephala, the cooking utensils suggest that the inhabitants included mainlanders.

attacks instead of being the perpetrators of such acts (see Bevan and Conolly 2013, 192). Regarding Crete, in the Hellenistic period piracy may have contributed significantly to the economy and wider importance of many of its *poleis*. Accordingly, after the Arab conquest in the early 9th century CE, the fleets setting sail from Crete devastated the coastal regions and islands of the East Roman Empire (Christides 1981; 1984, 162–63, 165–67, 192; Yannopoulos 2011, 163), so much so that it was called *θεόλεστος Κρήτη* (“goddamned Crete”) by Constantinus Porphyrogenitus (1830, 651.15). In the 13th/12th centuries BCE, though, Crete was in the opposite position.

The progressive decline of the main ports and the abandonment of the coastal areas in LM IIIB suggest that Crete became the target of systematic attacks from the sea – a situation that apparently continued in LM IIIC. The causes of these developments, all the more so their precocious appearance in relation to the rest of the Aegean, may lie in the lack of strong polities on the island during the later part of the 13th century BCE – if not much earlier at certain regions. The geographical position of Crete at the crossroads of the sea routes that joined the Aegean with the central and eastern Mediterranean would have also contributed to the frequency and scale of the depredations; if nothing else, these routes were also used by the mercenaries who offered their services to the states of both the Aegean and the east Mediterranean – groups that would have been prone to turn to piracy and freebooting when in need or enabled by the circumstances (Samaras 2015, 192; Jung 2018, 285–86; Maran 2022, 240–41). Having frequented Crete and being aware of its riches and internal political situation, such bands may have chosen the island as a target of their raids and a base for further attacks – and this may have occurred on an even larger scale in the context of the displacements caused by the 1200 BCE collapse. In this regard, if the hypothesis of a pirate base on Dia, right in front of the port of Knossos, is indeed true, this would signify a reality radically different from that of the “Minoan Thalassocracy” of the Neopalatial period: instead of dominating the seas, the inhabitants of once mighty Knossos were under the threat of a *θεόλεστος Δία*.

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The Multiple Facets of the Seafarer in the Late Bronze Age Aegean

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ABSTRACT

The heyday of the Mycenaean palaces coincides with a period when international trade and overseas voyages increased, due to the complex and centralized administrations that encouraged such actions. The Mycenaean palaces were part of an international network linking Mediterranean elites, although there are lacunae concerning the agents who engaged in those actions, their social identity, and the variety of seafaring activities that they could accomplish with their contemporary technological means. The social background of the Mycenaean seafarer seemingly matches that of the palatial elite as the prime agent of such actions, since the latter had the resources but also the motivation, which was the acquisition of exotic goods, a common practice for the rulers of the Late Bronze Age. The need to obtain valuable resources may not have been limited to peaceful means, like trade and gift exchange, but it could have involved violence, warfare, pillaging and piracy. The main purpose of this paper is to try to approach seafarers and their affiliations, i.e., the palatial and non-palatial agents. The difficulty in distinguishing between the last two intensifies even more when the line between warfare (which would have been characteristic of the Mycenaean administration center) and actions related to piracy is blurred.

INTRODUCTION

The sea is a fundamental element of the Mediterranean civilizations and a primary agent in their cultural evolution. The Mediterranean Sea provided a comprehensive range of possibilities and a range of barriers that each civilization had to adapt and overcome (Panagiotopoulos 2011, 37; Broodbank 2013, 65–71, 87, 154–56). Bronze Age cultures developed largely independently and asymmetrically, but, through continuous seafaring and wayfaring, the Mediterranean Sea created an entangled environment that engaged all who took part in those movements or interacted with the mobile agents (the “travelers”) themselves (Van De Mieroop 2005, 119; Panagiotopoulos 2011, 38–40). Each of those civilizations had a connection to the sea and their overseas inhabitants that is tentatively implied by the dispersion of artifacts (especially pottery), and shared technological innovations across the Mediterranean (Leidwanger and Knappett 2018, 3). Despite some similarities, not all cultural groups shared the same experiences on the sea, while some of them may have been shaped under the effect of maritime activities. The Mycenaean cultural group probably belonged to the latter category and through the connections they participated in over time, as with the Cycladic and Minoan palatial culture, they rose to represent the most dominant cultural trend in the southern Aegean during most of the Late Bronze Age (LBA).

The treasures of the Shaft Graves in Mycenae and the other elite burials around the Aegean during the early Mycenaean period (Late Helladic [LH] I–IIA, ca. 1700–1450 BCE), including certain “anticipations” of this

phenomenon, as in the elite warrior burial from Middle Helladic (MH) Kolonna, dated to the 18th century BCE (Driessen and Macdonald 1984, 66–7; Voutsaki 1999, 112–16), suggest the existence of an active and socially distinguishable group that sought to obtain prestige goods and establish connections with other cultural groups (Wright 1995, 69).

Those early activities may have taken more violent forms, as seen in the variety of weapons and the martial iconography that was preferred during the late MH and early LH period, in the 17th–16th centuries BCE (Acheson 1999, 97). Furthermore, the number of fortified sites grew during that period (Maran 1995, 68–9; Deger-Jalkotzy 1999, 122; Gauss 2018, 51; 2019, 64–5), which might be indicative of a turbulent phase. In the following periods and simultaneously with the establishment of the first palaces in the Greek mainland during the 14th century BCE, their scope and engagement in seaborne activities increased. During the LBA, the Mycenaean cultural trends expanded throughout the Aegean and Ionian Seas, as reflected in the decorated pottery styles and various finds, e.g., in Rhodes (Benzi 1988; Karantzali 2009, 355–57) and Zakynthos (van Wijngaarden et al. 2021, 604–10). Moreover, administrative centers in central and western Crete enjoyed direct overseas contact with the palaces of the Greek mainland, as indicated by the (inscribed) transport stirrup jar traffic (Preston 2008, 311–12; Pratt 2014, 59, 74, 84–6; 2016, 42–6). Lastly, traces of Mycenaean influence and possible occasional physical presence can be found in the eastern Mediterranean, like Cyprus and the Levant, as well as in the central Mediterranean, e.g., in Italy, Sardinia and the coasts of the Adriatic Sea.

The expansion and increase of Mycenaean pottery abroad can indicate a more intense interaction with the sea and its people during the Palatial period (LH IIIA2–IIIB, late 14th and 13th centuries BCE). The mainland palaces would have been the main factor in that kind of venture. Even so, direct commercial interests of the Mycenaean elite are not clear on the palatial book-keeping records in the Linear B script (de Fidio 2001, 17–8), which raises the question of whether other groups, perhaps to some degree independent from the palaces and its elite, were active in this realm. Those groups, which we could characterize as non-palatial, would have had a certain level of independence from the palaces and would not have had a strong presence in the palatial Linear B archives. From the archival documents in the Linear B script, we observe multiple economic and social domains that the palace was involved in, but that was just a fraction of the total economic activity. Even more, the archives cover only a later period and different palatial centers (Palaima 2010, 358–9). The Linear B tablets also reveal other possible social and administrative bodies, such as the *da-mo* (“community”), which in turn show us the existence of independent or at least semi-independent agents other than the palatial ones (Shelmerdine 2006, 75). Moreover, based on the vital need of the Mycenaean elite groups to acquire prestige goods as well as valuable raw materials, like copper and bronze (Wright 1995, esp. 68–70; Voutsaki 2001, 208–13), we could propose that specific entrepreneurial individuals and groups might have emerged to meet those demands.

Unfortunately, the Linear B tablets offer us limited evidence about maritime affairs (Palaima 1991, 274) and in conjunction with the inherent difficulty of controlling naval trade and other seaborne activities (Broodbank 2013, 466; Monroe 2015, 7–8, 41–2; Sherratt 2016, 290–92), all of the above generates a realm of possibilities for numerous non-palatial agents, who possibly had an interdependent relation with the palaces of the Mycenaean or Eastern palaces. This level of interdependency is challenging to distinguish, while palatial and non-palatial sectors could have overlapped (de Fidio 2001, 22–3).

To study and understand the characteristics of the Mycenaean seafarers, we would need to utilize every piece of evidence we have at our disposal. Detailed analyses have been conducted regarding maritime affairs by the examination of contemporary iconography and written sources (Wachsmann 1981, 1995, 1998; Wedde 1999, 2001, 2005, 2006; Emanuel 2014, 2017, 2021), which we can utilize to investigate the people behind them. The aim of this paper would not be to categorize certain groups rigidly as traders, mercenaries, pirates or military personnel, but to assess the “fluidity” of their positions, as they could have been able to attain a variety of roles (either overlapping or not mutually exclusive), depending on the circumstances and their needs.

THE SOCIAL POSITION AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MYCENAEAN SEAFARER

The mainland palaces were developed by certain influential groups that managed through their actions and the possession of prestige goods to assure their legitimate claims to power (Voutsaki 2001, 213; Killen 2008, 178–79; Shelmerdine 2008, 145). Those groups, which were probably directed towards foreign and other peer groups on the Greek mainland, utilized violent means to consolidate power (Wright 2008, 241–2, 245–6; Tartaron 2013, 64). However, we should not exclude peaceful ways that could also have been used, such as trade with overseas regions.

During that period (MH/LH I), we have evidence of Mycenaean pottery in several sites around the Mediterranean (van Wijngaarden 2002, 261–73). The non-systematic character of overseas contact is reflected in the disparity in their distribution and typology, perhaps suggestive of the opportunistic mobilization of certain independent groups who sought personal wealth (Wright 2008, 243). Those activities shaped the palatial centers of the subsequent period and, by bringing in the palatial Minoan traditions, the Mycenaean elites were able to start using more systematic and lucrative methods to support its administration needs, such as diplomacy through gift-exchange, while still being able to employ violent means, if necessary.

The increase of Mycenaean artifacts in the Mediterranean regions was gradual, but as mentioned above, it was already happening through non-systematic contacts. Those contacts set the foundations of the Mycenaean palatial systems; one such example is the assimilation of Minoan traditions, whose civilization had dominated the Aegean and had established a wide maritime network throughout the Mediterranean (Maran 2011, 284, 289).

This proved effective, since Mycenaean pottery began appearing exponentially throughout the Mediterranean during LH III. In some areas, like Cyprus and the Levant, Mycenaean products, especially painted pottery, were seemingly highly valued (van Wijngaarden 2002, 275–80). In Cyprus, the influence of Mycenaean pottery and possibly other perishable materials, such as wine, perfumes and textiles, may have played an essential role in local strategies of status legitimacy and influenced Late Cypriote social practices. Their symbolic “weight” could have been due to their impressive decoration in comparison to indigenous ceramics or other locally available items, or it might have been a result of their exotic origin and the status of the Mycenaean seafarers, who might have been traders themselves or acted as guards on trading vessels (Kristiansen 2016, 166–67).

Another aspect we should examine is the fact that maritime activities gave even less influential, non-palatial groups an opportunity to participate in the development of LBA long-distance networks. The growth of commerce and production would have attracted numerous groups independent or semi-dependent from the palatial control, whose characteristics and significance have been examined by several scholars (e.g., Cline 1995, 278–79; de Fidio 2001; Monroe 2011, 94–6). In the Mycenaean world, those groups have not left any clear archaeological traces, which has led to the interpretation that the movement of goods was under control by the Mycenaean elites through a gift exchange system with peer groups (Voutsaki 2001, 211–12; Mee 2008, esp. 363–64, 378, 382). That system would have acted as a way to acquire prestige goods and valuable materials and would have helped in the establishment of diplomatic relations, resulting in the formation of alliances and further cooperation (Mee 2008, 382).

There are, however, two problems with the interpretation of Mycenaean artifacts and pottery as evidence for gift-exchange across the Mediterranean. Firstly, the distribution, quality and quantity of Mycenaean pottery “abroad” are not sufficient for exchanges of such status. Secondly, the systemic frequency of gift exchanges may not have provided a sufficiently reciprocal and stable supply of materials. However, a counterargument to the second problem would be supplied by the content of the Uluburun cargo, which was able to cover multiple palatial needs, such as payments and equipment with only its bronze oxhide ingots (Papasavvas 2021, 135–43). Furthermore, the weapons found at the shipwreck site have suggested the theory that a particular group was on board the ship and might have sought control over its cargo (Pulak 2005, 308; Bachhuber 2006, 354–55, 359).

Considering the statements above, we may ask the following questions: to what extent were the palatial agents involved in maritime activities, and what was the role of non-palatial agents in such activities? The Mycenaean palaces were able to influence maritime activity indirectly, since they had significant resources. One such example would have been the control of naval nodes, such as the one through the Dodecanese, so they could have watched over any ship sailing to or from Anatolia and protected them from natural and human dangers (Sherratt 2001, 218–24, 226–27). However, we cannot exclude that palatial agents would have acted as potential threat themselves, since they had an immediate interest in the cargo borne on many of those vessels (Panagiotopoulos 2011, 44–5).

Another instance, where we have evidence for the interaction between palatial and non-palatial agents, is the *ta-ra-si-ja* system (Killen 2001, 161, 175–76; 2008, 194–5). In several Linear B tablets, we find that specific term, as well as some of its derivatives (*a-ta-ra-si-jo* “lacking/ without *ta-ra-si-ja*”), which describes an interaction of economic nature between the palace as holder of raw material and specialized artisans, who were at least partially unaffiliated with it (Shelmerdine 2008, 143). In the Linear B tablets of the Jn series from Pylos, we observe the recording of bronze allotments of various quantities from the palace to independent or semi-independent copper-/bronze-smiths (*ka-ke-we*) for them to be processed and returned in the form of finished products (Ventris and Chadwick 1973, 508–11; Killen 2008, 194). If that interpretation is accurate, it suggests that the Mycenaean palaces did not have total control over all stages of craft production, like metalwork, textile manufacture and wheel chariot production. Instead, the palaces cooperated with other agents (partly extraneous) to advance their production.

Following that logic, we cannot exclude the possibility of similar groups collaborating with the palaces without them being under their exclusive control. Unfortunately, no such interaction concerning the sea activities has been uncovered in the Linear B records. However, we know about the mobilization of South European groups into the East Mediterranean and that they influenced the Mycenaean material culture (Leidwanger and Knappett 2018, 1–3; Maran 2018, 225–26). Groups and individuals of different specializations might have traveled to and from the Aegean, offering services and exchanging material goods (Kristiansen 2016, 172–80). The manner of their interaction is unknown and presumably diverse based on the place and the period, but that kind of mobilization could have been caused by more than just a few people of elite status. Conclusively, despite having the full potential to engage in traveling and other seaborne activities, palatial agents may not have been able to fulfill their needs on their own and may have resorted to cooperation and the assistance of other non-palatial groups.

The co-existence of the palatial and independent or semi-dependent groups may have been the result of the palatial agents taking over more responsibilities once the palaces had been established and the Mycenaean administration focused on religion as a unifying factor, with maritime activities (especially long-distance) becoming de-prioritized (Wright 1995, 73–4; Deger-Jalkotzy 1999, 126–27). The effects of such a decision, as well as the further expansion of the palaces, might have given rise to higher influx of more prestige and valuable goods, which in turn mobilized an increasing number of groups to take on maritime activities (Monroe 2015, 45; Knapp 2018, 35). However, the evidence for such groups is scanty on the Linear B tablets; only a few related occupational appellations can be identified, such as the *e-re-ta* (rowers) or the *na-u-do-mo*, the latter in the fragmentary tablets PY Vn 865 and Na 568, which can be related to the occupation of the “ship-builder” (Hocker and Palaima 1990–1991). Nevertheless, due to the elliptical nature of the Linear B records, which were meant for internal book-keeping purposes, we cannot know to what extent these individuals were palace-dependent or not.

Contemporary Near Eastern sources provide more information about groups related to maritime activities and, in many cases, distinguish merchants from elite groups (Monroe 2009, 56–65; 2015, 11–2, 36–42, 45–6; Knapp 2018, 113–14, 187–88). In the LBA Aegean, such distinction is rather obscure; while some studies have focused on palatial and non-palatial contexts of economic activity (Halstead 1993; 2001, 38–50), the conclusion of a collaboration between the palace and non-palatial agents is commonly reached (de Fidio 2001, 23–4; Voutsaki 2001, 211), with the former assuming a dominant role in political economies of those regions in the LBA Aegean where they were established.

THE ACTIVITIES AND CAPABILITIES OF THE SEAFARERS

The social background provides valuable information about the people and their relation to maritime activities. However, their background does not necessarily define their actions (Broodbank 2013, 465–66) and sometimes, on the sea, each situation may become warped based on the perspective of each participant in it. The activities, in which palatial and non-palatial agents might have been engaged in, provide little evidence for us to distinguish them. For example, warfare and piracy often share many characteristics and their perpetrators are often accused of the latter instead of the former (Emanuel 2018; 2021, 23). In this regard, we should consider the possibilities seafaring provided to each agent and how it enabled them to exercise both of those actions and even more (Monroe 2015, 42–5). Still, the characteristics of each seaborne action may give us clues about these groups. To do that, we may conventionally divide certain fundamental maritime activities into three separate categories: (1) economic, (2) administrative / political, and (3) warfare. Also, we should clarify that those categories concern the activities and not their agents, who may have been involved in more than one category.

Starting from the first category, trade is commonly viewed as the prime economic activity that involves movement of any significant scale. Therefore, the existence of important political centers, such as the Cretan and the Mainland palaces, is not the starting point of such activities; they are a continuation of similar activities only on a higher and more systematic level concerning their demands. Tartaron (2013, 190–98) has described the concept of the “Small Worlds” (see also Broodbank 2000; 2014, 52–6; Horden and Purcell 2000, 523; Beaujard 2011, 7–8, 19), a network of interdependent and (chiefly heterarchically) related communities, whose development is parallel and interconnected. Specifically, regions like the Saronic Gulf (Tartaron 2013, 212–71; 2018, 73–82) were homes of multiple settlements, which had been subjects of a single or numerous overlords over time. Nevertheless, despite any higher authority, the connection between those settlements remained intact, at least on some level, due to their proximity and diachronic relation. In those microcosms, any authority would have contributed only by expanding the horizons of those worlds through the development of the appropriate infrastructure, whereby better control over the region could be gained. Therefore, people already could accomplish such feats in some capacity, and any higher authority promoted and encouraged such kind of activities (Kristiansen 2016, 160).

The problem in tracking short-distance trade is its scale and potential complexity, which leaves us with minimal evidence as a result of the quantity and perishable nature of many products. On the other hand, long-distance trade has a higher energy consumption, so it should also have a similar output. To attribute trading capabilities in both the palatial and non-palatial agents, we will have to combine the theoretical framework of the “Small Worlds” with the diachronic communication of more prominent ruling centers. Thus, a network is generated between tangent “Small Worlds”, which were controlled and maintained by some institutionalized authority/-ies, while allowing for certain opportunistic seafarers to traverse them (Monroe 2009, 239). That could have given them a chance to escape the limits of their communities, as well as to advertise their seafaring skills, thus promoting cooperation with higher authorities. One example of such a development might have been the fishermen. The expertise that came with that and other similar professions were able to make a transition to long-distance trade and other maritime activities smoother.

The second category consists of several activities requiring an organized administration center, whose subjects must accomplish specific actions to function and develop. A well-known example of such action is gift-exchange. This tradition was in effect during the LBA and was significant for any established elite group, as it functioned as a tool for maintaining their social status and enhancing their legitimacy. We can imagine the participation of several different palatial and non-palatial agents to accomplish such ambitious projects. Those exchanges might have been a seasonal event (Wachsmann 1998, 295–99) or part of a ritualistic process (Knapp 2018, 196), like the ship procession of Akrotiri (Raban 1984, esp. 19), but required a significant organizational capability. To put that into perspective, the gift of the Pharaoh to the king of Alashiya, identified with the island of Cyprus, would need the cargo capacity of three ships at the size of Uluburun (Papasavvas 2021, 129). The transportation of such valuable cargo, the equipment, the crew and their long journeys in general required a high organizational skill, which was within the abilities of the LBA centralized states.

From the Linear B archives, we have recordings of rowers on tablets PY An 1, An 610 and An 720, whose context, although highly elliptical, may reveal the interest and the capability of the palace of Pylos on seafaring ventures (Palaima 1991, 285–86; Wachsmann 1999). Unfortunately, as far as the Mycenaean non-palatial agents are concerned, we cannot know for sure if they were also able to venture as far as the east or west Mediterranean, but eastern recordings of their counterparts show us that even merchants could attain significant wealth, while working within a similar ruling system, but also had some protection through some kind of legislative support, thus making those expeditions possible even for non-palatial agents (Monroe 2015, 18–9, 23–4).

By extension, we should consider other skills that would have been useful on such long journeys and gift exchanges; an example is the presence of a mediator or a translator, either from the region whence the seafarers departed, a local at the place of destination or anyone knowledgeable enough to act in this capacity (Panagiotopoulos 2011, 41–3). Furthermore, considering the value of some shipments and the high risk in those journeys, we would expect the presence of armed guards and the employment of mercenaries was a common practice among Near Eastern rulers (Sandars 1985, 49–53). Consequently, we can assume palatial and non-palatial agents' participation even on more significant ventures. How they were cooperating cannot be precisely known. Still, in the case of the Mycenaean palaces, the non-palatial workforce might have been under some forced or obligatory service, perhaps as a means of debt payment or acquiring land privileges (Killen 1983; 2008, 171; Shelmerdine 2008, 147).

Since the Mycenaean palaces had only a portion of the total production under their control, the emergence and prosperity of several non-palatial individuals and groups were very likely. Even groups that were neither traders nor palatial agents could have benefitted from such occasions, as we observe from the possible presence of “multiethnic” groups from the Mediterranean but also from central European regions (Kristiansen 2016; Konstantinidi-Syvridi 2021, 54–6), who might have traveled as mercenary groups (Maran 2018, 225–33) and offered their services to the palatial centers in exchange of prestige and valuable goods. Conclusively, the palaces might have been able to undertake the more daring ventures because of their resources and organization skills, but that does not exclude the involvement of non-palatial agents. A sailing journey requires several individuals and experts, possessing skills outside the confines of palatial control (at least as textually documented), thus requiring cooperation with other extraneous groups. Even so, the palaces would be able to intervene and benefit by promoting such situations, for example, by constructing and maintaining harbors and anchorages (Marazzi 2018, 99–105). Thus, palaces encouraged trade within their realm, which in turn enabled them to impose taxes on the groups that utilize their infrastructures.

The last category concerns seaborne hostile actions and violent tactics. The problem with such actions is the distinction between organized warfare and acts of piracy, which include hit-and-run tactics, raiding, kidnapping and undermining actions, while avoiding direct conflict (Emanuel 2018, 68–78; Knapp 2020, 144). This problem is further intensified when trying to identify their perpetrators, since various groups (palatial and non-palatial) could commit such actions within a period of human mobilization and intensive trade, primarily through the gift-exchange system (Braudel 1973, 883–84; Broodbank 2013, 466; Knapp 2020, 143).

De Souza (1999, 16–7) rejects the term *piracy* without the proper legislative framework, thus identifying them all as acts of warfare by default during the LBA. However, Emanuel (2018, 73–4) argues that even without proper definition, we can still distinguish the two of them by several distinct characteristics; for example, the involvement of a state in such actions would make it an act of warfare. Furthermore, the operational scale is essential, since pirates would usually utilize speed and avoid conflict, then war actions would have been conducted on larger scales. For example, the famous relief of the battle with the Sea Peoples from Medinet Habu implies the organizational level of a state-like authority (Wiener 1999, 411–12) and would not have had such impact, at least as the one described by the Egyptian sources, if it was a minor pirate raid. Therefore, identifying agents as palatial or non-palatial can be difficult given our current evidence. In this regard, a tablet from Amarna (EA 38) seems to suggest that participation of a state authority in raids was not impossible; in this letter, the king of Alashiya, referring to the Pharaoh, denied his involvement in raiding the coasts of Egypt, while also

complaining about his lands being overrun by Lukka (inhabiting perhaps the region later known as Lycia in southwestern Anatolia) (Emanuel 2021, 94–5).

Returning to the people amenable to such actions, we can look again at Wiener's view (Wiener 1999, 411–12) that large-scale raids required good organization. Without discounting the ability of independent agents in the Aegean, the Mycenaean palaces were probably the only entities capable of conducting significant enough raids that were able to damage other centers of similar or larger size. Conversely, less influential agents could only operate on a more limited scale, without causing significant disruption at a broader level (Knapp and Manning 2016, 122–23, 135; Knapp 2020, 155–56; contra Hitchcock and Maeir 2016, 256–60).

The obscurity that veils the perpetrators of those hostile actions, either if those were considered piracy or warfare, seems to be related to two significant factors. The first one is that the resources gained from accomplishing such deeds were essential in administration as much as in maintaining and improving social status. The second factor is the “flexibility” that a seafarer could have had. Those specific groups could utilize their skills and assume different roles depending on each situation. Mycenaean elite groups constantly needed valuable resources (e.g., copper) and were also capable of launching naval expeditions (in consideration of PY An 610, see Tartaron 2013, 125–26). Consequently, actions like raiding and piracy, which could have provided the necessary materials, should not be excluded from the agendas of the palatial agents (Samaras 2015, 200).

THE IMPACT OF MARITIME TECHNOLOGY ON THE MYCENAEAN WORLD

*“Consider things, and you will have humans.
Consider humans, and you are by that very act interested in things.”*
(Latour 2000, 20)

In the previous sections, we focused on the human factor and its activities, observing interactions related to the Mycenaean social organization, economy, and administration. However, the analysis of material culture might give us additional insights into those human groups (Knappett 2006; Olsen 2010; Knappett and Kiriati 2016, 1–17). The close relationship between the human and the material factor allows us to interpret the Mycenaean society and its activities not only on their own, but also as a result of the available technology that made them possible. On the other hand, we can watch the development of that technology due to society's demand for better means to yield more gainful results in its endeavors.

The technologies we could analyze are numerous, but we would limit ourselves to a single yet important technology for this paper. Ships have been used and developed throughout human history; for the period under consideration, extensive research on the LBA ships is already available in detailed analyses of iconographic, archaeological and textual evidence (Casson 1994; Wachsmann 1995, 1998; Wedde 1999, 2000, 2005; Emanuel 2017, 2021). Drawing on Knappett's (2006, 140) theoretical framework, we can examine the effect of the physical world on social institutions, human agents and their interactions. Therefore, we should first establish that we have no clear or detailed depictions of the LBA ships for warships or trading vessels (Tartaron 2013, 57–8). However, their lack of specialization may pertain to their capacity to work as both raiding ships and transport vessels (Casson 1994, 65–8; Wedde 2001, 610–12). Even the oared galleys, a characteristic Mycenaean type of vessel, which was probably of Greek origin (Wachsmann 1981, 209–13; Wedde 2005, 29), had a flexible nature and additional uses other than to be used in warfare (Tartaron 2013, 58–9, 63). Therefore, by examining the ship development, from the vessels depicted on the matt-painted jars from MH Kolonna on Aegina to the painted pottery of LH IIIC (ca. 18th to 12th century BCE), we can see that oared-type vessels have been dominant in the Aegean. Another evidence of those vessels' flexibility is their inability to be used as weapons, in contrast to the later Classical triremes, in which the projection on the keel at the bow side of the ship did not have the strength to ram other ships effectively, but was probably used for landing the ship on the beaches (Wachsmann 1998, 344–46). On the relief from Medinet Habu, we can observe that the naval battle is done mainly by men

wielding hooks used to capsize the enemy ships (Wachsmann 1981, 216). With all of the above in mind, we can suggest that the Mycenaean seafarers on board those ships were able to assume multiple roles depending on the circumstances.

For trade and transportation, they would have chosen their vessel by cargo capacity; for warfare or piratical actions, they would have prioritized speed and crew size. Van de Moortel (2017, 267) also categorized the LH IIIB–C ships into two types D1 and D2 based on the available iconography, with D2 types having a curved hull possibly preferred as a trading vessel, and D1 types feature a straight bottom hull, which in that case favors speed and it might be better suited for military operations. Despite such a categorization, both of those types could have been used in both trade and warfare if needed (Van de Moortel 2017, 268). Therefore, we can assume that any variant of the oared galley could potentially be used in multiple situations and for multiple purposes, while the differences in their typology were based on the preferred use of the vessels in the context of their original construction.

Considering the characteristics of those ships and the general picture of the LBA in the Mediterranean, Mycenaean seafaring groups could have taken up multiple roles, disregarding the social position of each group and individual. During the LH IIIA2–IIIB, Mycenaean palaces were already engaged in trading and they had a significant interest in the exotic materials coming from the east Mediterranean, as well as other European regions (Tartaron 2013, 20–30, 69). However, despite their central position in terms of the west and east Mediterranean, the far richer eastern coasts were situated at the edge of the Mycenaean sphere of influence. Therefore, there was a need for multifunctional types of ships that were able to accomplish long-distance journeys, protect themselves from dangers or even engage in hostile actions along the trading routes if needed.

There is a relative scarcity of ship representations during the LH IIIA2–IIIB (Petrakis 2011, 218; Tartaron 2013, 59–60; Kramer-Hajos 2016, 128–41), which may indicate that maritime activity was not at the epicenter of the palatial scope. An alternative hypothesis is that during their peak the Mycenaean palaces were without any apparent internal or external disturbances and the need to express naval themes might have been secondary to others. Without diminishing the effect of maritime activities during that period, it should be considered that the Mycenaean elite could focus on administration, probably influenced by religion. That would possibly explain the preference for other decorating themes, although there is no clear indication to support this suggestion further.

In the following period (i.e., the LH IIIC), the naval themes increased dramatically compared to the previous periods. The warlike overtones become common in this period's pictorial themes around the Aegean, with depictions of naval battles, namely from Kynos (Dakoronia 2006, with further bibliography). Moreover, armed or helmeted rowers or other figures on board are also some of the features that display similar naval activities (Emanuel 2021, 320–23). The appearance of such a theme should not necessarily imply an increase in such activities, but a refocus on the significance of those actions and their perpetrators. The decline of the Mycenaean palaces would have resulted in further decentralization, especially in the peripheral regions of the Mycenaean sphere of influence (Tartaron 2013, 69–71). That would have led to the emergence of regional rulers, who would have risen to the occasion and prospered by using their naval skills and exploiting the waning power of the palaces to their benefit. This is showcased better in Wedde's suggestion (2005, 33–6) of a “galley subculture” centered on the ship captains and their crews, who sailed the Aegean Sea. Their activity might have been moderately suppressed by the Mycenaean palaces at their peak, but as of the end of their rule, groups using such vessels might have turned on palatial rulers, maybe even contributing to their final demise. Elite-related themes, such as feasting, hunting and fight scenes, were popular on pictorial pottery during LH IIIC, perhaps suggestive of new elite societies, which valued military prowess (Kramer-Hajos 2016, 149–65) or perhaps capitalized on associations with the palatial past (Crielaard 2006, 282–84). The oared galley made those acquisitions possible by any means, violent or non-violent, which led to the prosperity of groups probably unaffiliated with the palaces' administrations.

The LH IIIC iconography offers significant indications of the impact that those vessels had, as much as the actions that they allowed (Samaras 2015, 193–95, 199–200). Those deeds could be considered either piracy

or warfare; however, this distinction might not have mattered as much to the LH societies. Interestingly, the Mycenaean period seems to close on a “circle”, which started partly through the initiative of some opportunistic elite groups and, towards its end, came to reflect a similar situation, namely through the intense war activity on the sea and the importance of warrior prowess in contemporary social practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper has been to discuss some critical aspects of the identity and status of the people who were crossing the Aegean during the LBA. Nevertheless, as shown by the discussion above, the evidence does not point to a unique direction. On the contrary, the more we focus on these activities, the more we understand that the sea was not only a place where ships sailed and goods moved through. Groups originating from different backgrounds were able to sail the seas, each one of them bearing different agendas. The lack of total control of the sea routes allowed those groups to accomplish various feats and assume multiple roles, potentially interchangeably. Traders, mercenaries, warriors and pirates were able to interact with palatial and non-palatial agents depending on the circumstances and the needs of each group.

Detailed archaeological research and analytical studies of various categories of evidence (e.g., textual, iconographical) may enable us to identify certain factors, activities and networks that did affect or were affected by long-distance sea travel. The LBA seafarers were not necessarily representatives of their cultures, but they inevitably connected them through their own mobility, ideas and objects that moved with those groups.

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Seeking Timber in the Pirates' Lairs

The New Approach to Wenamun's Report

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ABSTRACT

The Egyptians used cedar wood for the construction of both the sacred barks and the ships sailing in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. However, the lack of cedar and timber suitable for shipbuilding in general led Egypt to seek various ways of securing the required quantity of wood. This is precisely the reason for the journey of the Egyptian priest Wenamun, who was sent by the High Priest of Amun at Thebes to the Phoenician city of Byblos to procure the necessary cedar wood to build the sacred bark of the god. During this journey, Wenamun was led into an action that could be described as piracy. The present paper attempts to show whether the text with Wenamun's adventures is a historical narrative, which offers valuable information about the political, social and economic developments that took place in the eastern Mediterranean during the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age. It also attempts to identify the political, economic and even psychological factors that contributed to Wenamun's action of attacking a ship on the high seas and stealing its silver. The main aim of examining this evidence is to determine whether Wenamun became, even temporarily, a pirate.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) in the Levant, powerful empires, such as those of the Egyptians and Hittites, coexisted with small kingdoms, which were mostly subordinate to some of the powers of the time. Egypt succeeded in consolidating its position in the region. The construction of Egyptian temples in Byblos and Egyptian-style fortresses in the Levant area, as well as the installation of an Egyptian governor in Byblos, confirm that Egypt tried in every way to secure its interests and procure the necessary supplies (Stein 2017, 17).

This situation was maintained until the 19th Dynasty (Sherratt 2003, 49–51), but changed significantly after the fall of the Hittite empire and the gradual weakening of Egypt in the early 12th century BCE. The new situation in the Levant is reflected in an 11th century BCE text, the story of Wenamun. The eponymous hero of the story, whose name is transcribed as *WN-Imn*, traveled to Byblos to obtain the necessary timber to build the sacred bark of Amun. This paper discusses the historicity of Wenamun's narrative and examines the depiction of piracy as per this text. To approach these issues, it is necessary to re-examine the text in direct relation to the social and political conditions developed in the eastern Mediterranean during the period of its composition, i.e., at the beginning of the 11th century BCE.



Fig. 1. The procession of Amun-Re's divine bark. Relief from the Red Chapel of Hatshepsut (photo by [N. Fletcher-Jones](#)).

THE STORY OF WENAMUN: LITERARY TEXT OR HISTORICAL DOCUMENT?

According to the surviving text, an Egyptian priest, Wenamun, is sent by the High Priest of Amun at Thebes Herihor to the Phoenician city of Byblos to acquire the necessary cedar wood in order to build the great noble bark of the god of Karnak (Fig. 1). He initially found himself in Tanis, where he accepted the help of Smendes, and from there he headed towards Dor, a coastal city at the foot of Mount Carmel, where the Tjeker lived, one of the groups included in the heterogeneous group known as *the Sea Peoples*. Some scholars associated their name with the term *Teucrians*, used by several ancient Greek and Roman authors to refer to the Trojans (e.g., Hdt. 2.114.2, 2.118.2–3, 5.13.2; Callim. *Hymn* 3.231; Verg. *Aen.* 1.248, 4.537, 12.824; for the Tjeker see Moreau 2003, 118, with further references).

While Wenamun was in Dor, one of his crew members stole a significant portion of the gold and silver that was intended for the purchase of cedar. To retrieve his lost wealth, Wenamun attacked a Tjeker ship and headed for Byblos, where Zakar-Baal, the ruler of the city, refused to help him and asked him to leave immediately. After several adventures, the hero of the story managed to secure the required timber. The ending remains unknown. All we know is that the Tjeker pursued him and that Wenamun ended up in Alashiya (Cyprus), where he was attacked, as the islanders tried to kill him. He finally escaped and headed to Hatiba, the princess of the local kingdom, asking her to protect him and help him return home (Wilson 1969a, 26–8; for Hatiba and the possibility of rule by women in LBA Cyprus see Middleton 2023, 102–7).

The text with the story of Wenamun was discovered on a two-leaf papyrus (known as M120) in 1891, and since then many different opinions have been expressed among scholars as to whether it is a purely literary text (e.g., Egberts 1991, 57), an authentic account (e.g., Erman 1923, 225; Wente 2003, 116) or an administrative report (e.g., Goedicke 1975, 4–5). More recently, Schipper (2005, 39–40) sought to reconcile these conflicting views arguing that, although the story of Wenamun is a highly artistic literary work, the text incorporates a wealth of historical knowledge.

This particular character of the text creates objections regarding its reliability, since a text in order to be considered “historical” and not a “historic-fiction” narrative should be confirmed by other sources. The acceptance of this position has always been the cradle of disputes that have been formulated about Wenamun. Certain elements, such as the founding of Tanis by Smendes and his friendly relations with the high priest of Amun, are not attested anywhere else except in the text of Wenamun. At the same time, the acceptance of the Tjeker presence in Dor during the 11th century BCE requires a more careful review. Excavations conducted in the area by Ephraim Stern (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) in the period 1980–2000 concluded that the city was inhabited around 1150 BCE; however findings and stratigraphy have not yet confirmed the presence of the Tjeker in the specific area before the beginning of the 10th century BCE, where two settlements have been identified, one of the Tjeker and a later one of the Phoenicians (Nibbi 1996, 77–95). On the other hand, in the *Onomasticon* of Amenope, an Egyptian text dated from the late 20th to 22nd Dynasty, the exact place of residence of the Sherden, Tjeker and the Philistines around Ako, Dor and the Philistine Pentapolis respectively is recorded (Stern 1994, 89).

At the same time, the exact dating of the text was another issue that troubled academic circles until the last decade or so. Most scholars have now accepted that the text was composed in the first half of the 11th century (for a full discussion see Sass 2002, 248–49). In any case, the text of Wenamun deserves special attention as it is the only, at least for now, written source, which renders in a way, perhaps literary, the political and social-economic status quo that had arisen in the eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the 11th century BCE.

The historical core of the text primarily lies in the reason for which the journey is made. Undoubtedly, the sacred boats of Amun were made of cedar wood because of the religious character attached to that wood (Meiggs 1982, 407). Understandably, since they also needed repairing from time to time, an interest in trying to source cedar arose. Unfortunately, the archaeological remains that can confirm the use of cedar by the Egyptians are very limited. Specifically, we currently know of the 4th Dynasty Pharaoh Khufu’s boat (Jenkins 1980, 80; Abdradou et al. 2022), the boats found at Dahshur (Creasman 2010, 113), as well as cedar planks found at Wadi/Mersa Gawasis (Ward and Zarraro 2010, 30).

The use of cedar wood by the Egyptians for the construction of both the sacred barks and the ships sailing in the Great Green Sea, i.e., the Mediterranean, as well as in the Red Sea, is also confirmed by written sources (Wilson 1969b, 227–63). The introduction of *ash* and *meru* timber as early as the 4th Dynasty period is mentioned in the fragmentary text of the Palermo Stele (Grimal 1988, 91–2). The mention of these two different types of wood has led some scholars to associate the name *ash* with cedar (Rich 2016, 52–3). Although there is much disagreement about this particular connection, the view of Chatonnet (2001, 43) can be accepted; he argued that the terms *meru* and *ash* refer to coniferous trees suitable for shipbuilding, which Egypt was deprived of. After all, as pointed out by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (19.58.3) and an Akkadian list of toponyms, Lebanon was known for both cedar and cypress (Rowton 1967, 269).

In most cases, neither the type of wood nor the use for which it was intended is specified. However, it appears that Egypt had very limited timber, which could not satisfy its needs, not only in shipbuilding but also in architecture. The Amarna letters confirm Egypt’s need to procure wood from other areas, such as Cyprus, since in the Troodos Mountains there were coniferous trees (pine and cedar) that could be used for shipbuilding (EA 35, 40; Moran 1992, 107, 113).

Egypt did not consistently rely on legal trade to acquire the timber it required; in certain cases, procurement was achieved through acts of looting. Such a case is referred on Kamose’s Second Stele, where, along with the commemoration of his victory against the Hyksos, it is also pointed out that from the various ships in the port of Avaris he secured various goods, among which were also various types of timber, without, however, them being named (Knapp 2018, 105). In other cases, looting of entire ships with all their goods is recorded, as seen in the chronicle of Thutmose III, which refers to the Pharaoh’s fifth campaign in the north (Breasted 1906, 196 §460). A similar incident is described in the chronicle of the ninth campaign of the same Pharaoh, which took place in the 29th year of his reign. After the capture of two cities in the Zahi region and the surrender of another

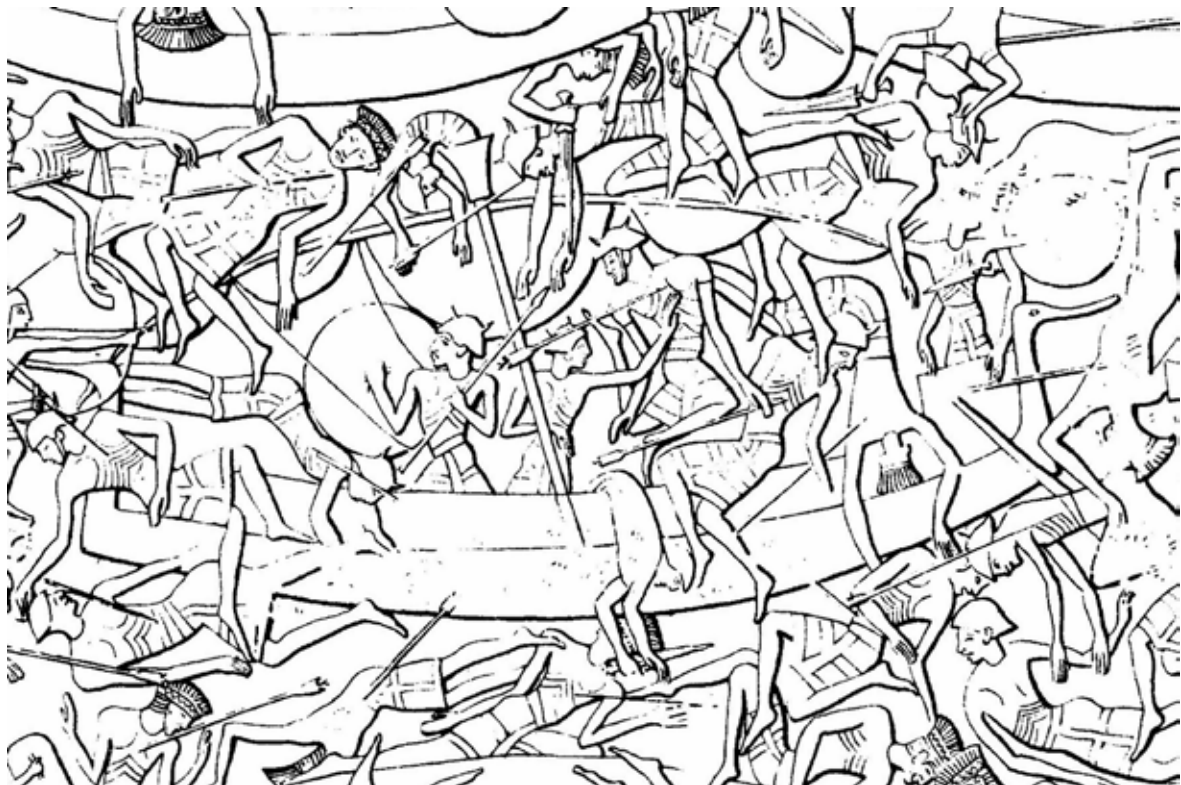


Fig. 2. Detail of the wall relief at Medinet Habu depicting Ramses III defeating the Sea Peoples in the naval battle of the Nile Delta (Oltau).

one in the Nuges region, the Pharaoh secured a quantity of wood, which is simply described as excellent without specifying its species (Breasted 1906, 205 §490). Perhaps the Zahi region was known for its timber or for some particular kind of tree and for this reason it is not mentioned by the writer of the chronicle.

Moreover, Egypt tried early on to bring under its control areas of the Levant from which it could receive as tribute, among other things, the timber it needed. In the record of the tribute paid by the region of Retenu, which is located in Palestine, to the Egyptian Pharaoh, it is noted that among other things he gave logs of every kind of tree that thrived in the region (Breasted 1906, 206 §491). Thutmose III created in the coastal cities of the Levant, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Byblos naval bases which, together with small garrisons, maintained Egypt's control in the region, but at the same time supplied Egypt with the goods it did not possess (Gilan 2013, 51). During his reign, Byblos sent cedar to the Pharaoh as tribute (Winand 2011, 544), while on Ramses III's funerary monument at Medinet Habu (Fig. 2) there are listed masts, sails and spars made of Phoenician wood (Lipshchitz and Biger 1991, 168). Therefore, it seems that the supply of cedar from Byblos mentioned in the text of Wenamun is a historical truth.

The choice of cedar by carpenters is still preferred today due to the properties it presents, and preference for it in antiquity was by no means accidental. Specifically, woodworkers, when choosing the appropriate timber for building a ship, are asked to take into account the hardness and density of the material, then its mechanical strength along with its resistance to attack by fungi, termites etc., while the speed at which drying is achieved should not be overlooked as well as the ease with which wood is processed (Meiggs 1982, 55; Damianidis 2013, 174–78). These elements should have been an a priori condition for the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean, with the result that cedar had become one of the most valuable types of woods, as it shows moderate variability in its dimensions, great resistance to biological attacks and moderate difficulty in its processing (Pavlogeorgatos 2012, 48–9; see also Pulak 2001; Lipshchitz 2012; Ward 2013; Rich 2016). Unfortunately, the texts from the eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Near East do not offer the necessary information about the preference for cedar wood. Several centuries later, Theophrastus (*Hist. pl.* 5.7.1–5.8.1) informs us about the properties of the cedar of Lebanon.



Fig. 3. The route of Wenamun's journey (map by the author).

The element, however, on which we should focus on our attention is the route taken by Wenamun when he sailed from Tanis and entered the Mediterranean (Fig. 3). The course he took is the usual route followed by a ship when traveling from Egypt to Levant, as this course was facilitated by the sea currents flowing in the area. Specifically, a current flowing from the Strait of Gibraltar, weakening near the Gulf of Sirte, was strengthened by the waters of the Nile that flowed into the Mediterranean, following a course to the east, crossing the Syro-Palestinian coast and from there reaching the northeastern coasts of Asia (Antypas 2019, 64–5). Along this route, there were also coastal cities with harbors and safe anchorages where each ship could stop. Three coastal cities are marked along Wenamun's route: Dor, Tyre and Byblos.

In all three of these cities, harbors and port facilities have been identified that are consistent with the period in which Wenamun's voyage takes place. The excavator of the underwater area around the coastline of Dor Avner Raban (University of Haifa) argues that these harbor facilities should be considered the first attributed to one of the so-called Sea Peoples (see Stern 1994, 97–8). Tyre also maintained close trade and political relations with Egypt due to its geographical location. This city from the end of the 11th century BCE began to acquire a decisive role in international trade. After all, this is attested by several later sources of the Hellenistic and Roman times, in which four different harbors are mentioned (Marriner et al. 2008, 1282). The Bronze Age port facilities of the city have been identified on the northern leeward façade of Tyre (Marriner and Morhange 2005, 183–84). Moreover, Tyre had a double port, one for conducting trade and one for docking warships (Woolmer 2017, 97). Regarding the port of Byblos, the research project “Byblos and the Sea Project”, directed by Nicolas Grimal and Martine Franchis-Allouche, confirmed the existence of a harbor during the Bronze Age at the southern foot of the ancient city (Franchis-Allouche and Grimal 2016, 248–74).

The course followed by Wenamun should also be examined in terms of time dimension. The length of time it takes to get from point A to point B was and continues to be of particular importance to sailors even today. According to the study by Crystal Safadi and Fraser Sturt (2019, 3–6), the time it took a ship to get from Byblos

to Cyprus was directly dependent not only on the season, but also on the time of day the journey would start. The aforementioned research demonstrated that the travel could be carried out during winter and that a direct connection between Byblos and Cyprus was possible without one having to run a route along the coast of Syro-Palestine to Ugarit and thence to head east towards Cyprus. Besides, a similar course to that of Wenamun is also confirmed in one of the Amarna letters (EA 114; Moran 1992, 188–89), where Rib-Hadda, in order to avoid the ships of the Aziru, orders Amanmasa to cross the open sea from Byblos to Cyprus and from there go to Egypt.

EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL OR PIRATE?

Wenamun's decision to rob a Tjeker ship reminds many of an act of piracy. The term *piracy* first appears in an Attic inscription of the mid-3rd century BCE from Rhamnous (de Souza 1999, 3–4). However, it can be argued that the concept of piracy predates the appearance of the term. For example, the term *bandits* was used by Homer (*ληϊστῆρες*, e.g., *Od.* 3.73, 17.425) and Thucydides (*λησται*, e.g., 1.8.1, 6.4.5) to refer to robbers of the sea, i.e., pirates (*LSJ*, s.v. *ληστεία*). In the eastern Mediterranean texts, there are several references to acts that could be characterized as piratical (e.g., Ormerod 1924, 81–8; Sandars 1985; Derks 2016, 17–9; Hitchcock and Maeir 2016; Kopanias 2019; *contra* de Souza 1999, 16–17). The Amarna letters reflect the insecurity existing at sea and the danger faced by coastal areas, which were often attacked by groups, whose main objective was to secure loot (EA 38; Moran 1992, 111–12). At the same time, many inscriptions that accompany the reliefs with the achievements of the Pharaohs point out the naval battles they fought to repel enemies attacking Egypt by sea, with a typical example being the naval battle of Ramses III at Medinet Habu (Emanuel 2017, 63–70; Kopanias 2021, 257–58; Fig. 2).

Before proceeding with the characterization of Wenamun as a pirate or not, it is necessary to clearly define the context within which an act can be considered as piracy. The general observation that in war armies meet and face each other on land or sea seems rather simplistic (Emanuel 2017, 33). Shelley Wachsmann (1998, 317–21), on the other hand, considers that in war there is involvement of the participating state with its troops and vessels, which does not happen in the case of piracy (see also Emanuel 2017, 33–5). Philip de Souza (1999, 1), referring to the piracy of Graeco-Roman times, has characterized the pirates as “armed robbers whose activities normally involve the use of ships”. In the story of Wenamun, there is no involvement of any state power. Wenamun acted alone, made a decision by himself and put it into effect immediately, without waiting for approval of an official state authority. In Egypt, no one knew anything about the unexpected turn of events that took place at Dor and then off Tyre. Wenamun neither reported anything back to his superiors, nor asked for their guidance about what course of action he should follow. His action was financially motivated and done for personal gain; he had to complete his mission and return to Egypt with the required amount of cedar.

The question inevitably arises, whether Wenamun could be classified as a pirate. It is a fact that, based on the modern perception of pirates, as it began to take shape in recent times, i.e., after the so-called “Golden Age of piracy” (late 17th – early 18th century CE), pirates are described as dangerous, marginalized groups, who plied the seas with the aim of plundering territories, killing, capturing inhabitants in order to sell them as slaves or to receive ransom for their release. For example, such an image of pirates is captured in *The Travels of Reverend Ólafur Egilsson*, a 17th-century text describing the raid of pirates from Salé and Algiers on Iceland (Hreinsson and Nichols 2008).

At the end of the LBA and the beginning of the Early Iron Age (EIA), however, the identity of the pirate does not seem to correspond to the one of a marginalized person, as it emerges from history and literature of the Early Modern and Modern periods. The environment in which the sailor, the merchant, the seafarer moves is fluid and full of multiple and unexpected risks. This element of the variability of conditions in the marine environment influenced and ultimately shaped trade relations and exchanges (Monroe 2011, 95). In this ever-changing

and unstable environment, people move for different reasons but with the same goal, profit. Although there were many dangers at sea, merchants gained much, as trade was already from the LBA a “heterarchical” activity that was not only controlled by official state bodies but also by private individuals (Monroe 2015, 46).

At the same time, the collapse of the great empires in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean at the end of the LBA led to “an increase in political, social and economic fragmentation and liquidity” (Sherratt 2003, 53). New social groups formed a new elite, which sought to establish itself, among other ways, through sea raids. This new elite, members of which participated in the commercial networks controlled by the palaces in the previous period, was now actively involved in trade but for their own benefit. Their involvement was achieved either through trade (by controlling the already existing trade routes and markets) or through piracy. Therefore, piracy should be understood as an “irregular, typically hostile, ongoing economic activity carried out for personal benefit and involving the use of ships, maritime mobility and plundering, at sea and along coastal areas” (Knapp 2018, 36). The pirate was not necessarily an adventurer, a bandit, but could be a ship owner, a merchant or even a government official, like Wenamun, who plundered when that was deemed necessary (Knapp 2020, 155).

Therefore, what needs to be taken into consideration is under which circumstances a person can become a pirate. In the *Odyssey* (14.191–359), the king of Ithaca, transformed into a beggar by Athena, tells Eumaeus a fake story, as he presents himself as the son of Castor from Crete. He recounts that, just a month after his return from the ten-year war in Troy, he sought new adventures; thus he and his companions went to Egypt for raiding. However, this expedition did not have a positive outcome, because of a factor pointed out by the narrator himself, which is directly related to human nature: “But my comrades, yielding to wantonness, and led on by their own might” (*Od.* 14.262, trans. A. T. Murray, Cambridge, Mass., 1919). Namely, arrogance led Odysseus’ companions to raid the fields, to enslave young children and women, and to kill unsuspecting farmers and fishermen, until Pharaoh sent an army to confront the invaders.

Wenamun’s transformation from the Elder of the Portal of the Temple of Amun to a pirate cannot be attributed to arrogance but to necessity that prompts him to such an act. The purpose of his journey was to secure the timber needed to build god’s great noble bark. His mission was going smoothly until he himself became the victim of a robbery. Wenamun’s decision to take a piratical action was not chosen from the beginning. At first, he appealed to the commander of Dor to help him find the amount that had been stolen from him, but Beder (or Bederi) refused to get involved, as the robbery had not been committed by any of his citizens. Without the help of any official authority, he decided to solve his problem by himself resorting to piracy, which was financially motivated and done for Wenamun’s own benefit. A possible failure would damage his prestige and it was highly likely he would be accused of very significant crimes. On the contrary, successful completion of his mission would further consolidate his position.

For a better understanding of his act, some other factors must be taken into account. The text of Wenamun dates to the 11th century BCE and captures the new political situation that has been formed in the Mediterranean. Cyprian Broodbank (2013, 394) has characterized the Mediterranean as “an anarchic, free-for-all zone for anyone with the skill, daring and funds to set out upon it”. The collapse of the Hittite empire, the emergence of new independent powerful centers on the Levant coast and the weakening of Egypt are evident in Wenamun’s text and can justify the state of uncertainty and instability that prevailed. He himself initially tried to follow the legal route by seeking the help of the official state authority. However, he realized that his status as a representative of Amun could no longer help him get out of his dead-end situation.

Egypt during the 11th century BCE has lost the prestige it possessed in the past (Emanuel 2021, 197–200). The presence of the Pharaoh through the emissaries of Egypt did not inspire any awe in the vassal rulers of the Levant (Stein 2017, 17). Wenamun perceived this new reality the hard way, by personally experiencing it. When he arrived in Byblos, he faced the prince of Byblos Zakar-Baals’ disparaging or even better hostile behavior, since the ruler of the city refused to offer him any help. Instead, he was persistently asking him for 29 days to leave, as the Tjeker were sailing off Byblos, and apparently he did not want to provoke them.

Byblos actively participated in the international trade network of the time and, as it can be understood from the text, its ruler managed timber trade by controlling the entire process of logging, transporting logs to Byblos, and also administering their sale. From the 12th to the 10th century BCE, the royal courts of the coastal cities of the Levant controlled trade, often using the institution of the *hubur*, a type of trading cooperative. The commander of Byblos stated that he had twenty ships in Byblos that are in *hubur* with Smendes of Egypt and also that fifty of his coastal ships are in partnership with Urkatel, an enigmatic person who must have been some powerful merchant (Woolmer 2017, 89). Byblos was no longer a tributary region of Egypt that was called upon to offer Egypt the needed timber. Its ruler managed the trade and determined the conditions under which it was conducted himself. What concerned Wenamun was how he would complete his mission, as his failure would be an admission of his own incompetence, potentially affecting his prestige and position in the priesthood.

CONCLUSIONS

The text of Wenamun's adventures has caused several disputes among scholars as to its historicity. There were many who questioned the historical basis of the text, considering it to be a literary narrative with elements of verisimilitude. However, the re-examination of the text that was attempted showed that the evidence presented is confirmed by both the archaeological findings and the written sources from the eastern Mediterranean at the end of the LBA and at the beginning of the EIA. The purpose of Wenamun's journey, namely to procure cedar from Byblos, is not a product of fiction, but seems to correspond to historical reality as Egypt did not have cedar wood, which was necessary for shipbuilding. Also, the course followed by the Egyptian official is as expected as the sea currents that sail in the area favor navigation. Furthermore, the mention of specific coastal cities, such as Dor, Tyre and Byblos, confirms the historical core of the text, since they have been proven to have had a port and port facilities and participated in the international trade network that had been formed at the beginning of the 11th century BCE.

At the same time, the narrative seems to reflect the political and social situation that had developed on the shores of the Levant after the fall of the Hittite empire and the weakening of Egypt. The autonomy and power the coastal cities in the aforementioned region had gained, affected the way that trade was as of then conducted for Egypt, and more specifically the cedar trade. Byblos was no longer a vassal to Egypt; instead it was its ruler who managed the cedar trade. This new reality turned Wenamun from a Priest of god Amun to a pirate in order to complete his mission. The hero's decision to attack and rob the Tjekker ship was a conscious action on his part. It constituted a solution, undoubtedly unorthodox, but acceptable, which could be applied whenever the circumstances dictated.



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Sailing through the “Unresting Sea”

The Archaeology of Piracy in the Early Iron Age Aegean

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates piracy in the Aegean during the Early Iron Age (late 11th–late 8th/early 7th century BCE), a phenomenon that remains difficult to trace archaeologically due to the absence of clear diagnostic indicators. It argues that the conditions emerging after the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system, conditions that continued to shape the ensuing centuries, created an exceptionally favorable environment for the development of piracy. Small, autonomous communities operated within expanding networks of maritime mobility and exchange, at a time when strong, centralized mechanisms of control were largely absent. The analysis brings together five strands of evidence: maritime connectivity, fortified island settlements, depictions of sea-borne conflict in Geometric pottery, warrior burials and the Homeric epics. Considered in combination, these elements suggest that piracy was a plausible and often pronounced aspect of Aegean seafaring during the Early Iron Age.

The paper then re-examines selected categories of evidence, from fortified sites and potential pirate havens to the pictorial pottery of the 8th century BCE, highlighting particularly revealing cases such as the New York krater MMA 34.11.2 and Tomb 79 at Lefkandi. These examples underscore the fluidity of maritime roles in this period: individuals and communities could act simultaneously, or alternately, as traders, warriors, sailors or raiders, depending on circumstances and opportunity. Moreover, both Geometric iconography and the Homeric epics appear to draw on contemporary practices and lived experiences, reflecting forms of maritime violence and raiding that were far from exceptional. Overall, the study proposes that piracy should not be viewed as a marginal or occasional occurrence, but as a critical component for understanding the social and maritime dynamics of the Early Iron Age Aegean.

INTRODUCTION

The principal challenge in the study of piracy in antiquity lies in developing an interpretive framework capable of addressing the theoretical and practical problems associated with the phenomenon, while at the same time foregrounding its significance as a substantive analytical component for understanding the past. Scholars have long grappled with issues that pose considerable interpretive difficulties, such as the definition of piracy (e.g., Ormerod 1924, 60; de Souza 1999, 1; Samaras 2015, 191; Skowronek 2016, 4) or its distinction from warfare (Samaras 2015, 191; Emanuel 2017, 33–7; 2018, 73–7). Even more demanding (and arguably more intriguing) is the question of how piracy can be identified and meaningfully interpreted within the archaeological record.

It is common, not only for antiquity but also for later periods, that the relationship piracy bears to other activities, as reflected in its material traces, evokes the notion of *equivifinality*, namely “the principle that the past could have unfolded in a multitude of ways, each of which could have resulted in the same evidence we are

presented with today” (Graham and Weingart 2015, 249). Indeed, several activities could generate outcomes identical to those produced by piracy, such as trade, elite gift exchange or warfare.

When the circulation of goods in the Aegean during the Early Iron Age (EIA; that is, from the late 11th to the late 8th/early 7th century BCE) is taken as an example, trade is typically privileged by researchers over alternative interpretations. And although the possibility of aristocratic gift exchange is frequently acknowledged (e.g., Morris 1986, 7–14; Wagner-Hasel 2006; Arrington 2016, 3, 5–6), the prospect of theft or piracy is almost never considered, despite the fact that, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the acquisition of wealth through raiding, whether on land or at sea, was both acceptable and commonplace in the Homeric epics.

In the case of piracy, the notion of *equifinality* extends to a range of issues beyond the circulation of goods. Some of these issues enter the sphere of *agency* and *social identity*, such as, for example, the deliberate projection of identities like those of the warrior, the seafarer or the trader. These identities are closely connected to the figure of the pirate and may, in certain circumstances, be expressed in the funerary record.

Regarding the EIA Aegean, which forms the focus of this paper, the well-known difficulties inherent in any archaeological approach to piracy (see Samaras, this volume) are compounded by the particular challenges of the period itself. These include the limited number of written sources, the generally reduced archaeological visibility and the absence of final publications for many sites, all of which restrict the interpretive possibilities even further. In short, piracy fails to receive adequate attention in the interpretive frameworks applied to the archaeology of the Aegean during the early historical period, not because the phenomenon was absent, but because clear answers to the issues outlined above, together with other questions that cannot be addressed here in detail, remain difficult to obtain.

Nevertheless, since the closing years of the twentieth century a number of scholars, including David Tandy (1997), Reinhard Jung (2009, 2018), Louise Hitchcock and Aren Maeir (2014, 2016, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), Vangelis Samaras (2015), Jeffrey Emanuel (2017, 2018, 2021) and Bernard Knapp (2018, 2020), have sought, each from a distinct perspective, to shed light on the phenomenon of piracy in the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and the EIA. The A.P.Pir.A. project, which since 2021 has examined the archaeological study of piracy in antiquity and includes the EIA within its scope, forms part of this broader scholarly current.

The present contribution aims to offer a modest addition to this line of inquiry by investigating piracy in the EIA Aegean through a reassessment of selected well-known archaeological sites and finds. Three working assumptions, discussed in greater detail in the introduction to this volume, are essential for this undertaking:

- Piracy is defined as a predatory act involving a maritime component, carried out primarily for personal gain.
- Despite certain possible shared features, piracy differs fundamentally from warfare, since the latter is rooted in political objectives and requires a firmly established politico-economic base.
- Strong maritime activity, the circulation of goods and sustained communication do not imply diminished levels of piracy; rather, they may create conditions conducive to its development.

EARLY IRON AGE AEGEAN: AN IDEAL SETTING FOR PIRACY

Although the identification of piracy in the archaeological record remains a considerable challenge, the broader conditions of the EIA suggest an environment in which maritime raiding would have been both feasible and potentially widespread. The relevant data, while falling short of direct proof, collectively form a compelling contextual basis that alleviates the inherent difficulty of demonstrating piracy beyond doubt. The discussion that follows draws on five key spheres of evidence: maritime trade, fortified settlements, iconography, warrior burials and the Homeric epics.

Maritime exchange and connectivity

The underlying conditions of the Aegean from the 12th century BCE onward are shaped by the political and administrative vacuum created by the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial system. This collapse encouraged the formation of smaller communities that operated with greater freedom of action in matters of exchange and resource management (e.g., Eder and Lemos 2020, 136; Maran and Wright 2020, 117–18). Within this setting, the evidence from Crete, the Dodecanese, the central and northern Aegean and Euboea indicates the existence of trade relations and interactions among these largely self-governing communities throughout the EIA, initially within neighboring regions (e.g., Leone 2012; Mazarakis Ainian 2012a; Eder and Lemos 2020, 137–39) and subsequently across the wider Mediterranean basin (e.g., Stampolidis 2003, 47, 51, 56, 64; Eder and Lemos 2020, 146–47).

Despite the difficulty of identifying it archaeologically, the positive correlation between piracy and maritime trade (Samaras 2015, 191; this volume; Hitchcock and Maeir 2016, 249–50; Emanuel 2017, 32–3, 38–9) should not be overlooked. The ensuing movement of goods in a maritime landscape lacking strong central authority creates numerous opportunities for predation, arising from the exploitation of vulnerable points along sea trade routes and their nodes (see also Driessen, this volume).

Fortified settlements

Movement along the sea routes was not dangerous only for seafarers, who risked potential attacks by pirates, but also for settlements situated on or near the coast. Maritime raids appear to have posed a significant threat during the EIA, since in certain cases the inhabitants of Aegean islands resorted to labor-intensive responses, such as the construction of fortifications and the choice of locations that were difficult to reach yet afforded effective oversight of the sea or else lay far inland (Calligas 1990, 81; Snodgrass 2006, 339). Examples include Emporio on Chios, Kephala on Skiathos, Zagora and Hypsele on Andros, Xobourgo on Tenos, Ayios Andreas on Siphnos, Vathy Limenari on Donousa and Vrokastro on Crete (see, for example, Frederiksen 2011, 17–8, 70–3, tables 1–2; Thaler 2020, 396–98; Fig. 1).

A comparison with mainland Greece is particularly revealing. As observed by Antony Snodgrass (2006, 333), none of the major settlements of the period seems to have possessed a fortification system. The fact that many of these settlements, such as Athens, Lefkandi and Eretria, lie on or near the coast, could be taken as evidence against the presence of piracy and in favor of safe and unhindered maritime exchange. Yet, the existence of contemporary fortified sites on the islands weakens such an interpretation. Moreover, even in much later periods, in which intense trade and pirate activity is firmly attested, such as the Hellenistic times, coastal settlements continued to flourish (Gabrielsen 2001, 220–23).

During the immediately preceding Postpalatial period (ca. 1200–1050 BCE), the same juxtaposition of coastal settlements and defensible sites is observed, the latter appearing to have been chosen to guard against seaborne threats. Several scholars have argued that the coastal sites may reflect communities engaged, among other activities, in piracy or that the benefits of proximity to key maritime routes outweighed the potential danger of raids (e.g., Nowicki 2000, 257–63; 2001, 29–30; 2011, 441; Wallace 2006, 636; Kramer-Hajos 2012, 815; Emanuel 2021, 285–87, 309). Nothing prevents such reasoning from being applied to the EIA as well, providing a plausible account for the coexistence of fortified island settlements and unfortified coastal ones.

Maritime conflict in iconography

The threat posed by the sea in the EIA Aegean is indicated not only by the fortified settlements, but also by scenes in vase painting of the Geometric period that attest to conflicts at sea. Although warriors in ships appear even earlier, for instance on certain pithos fragments from Kolonna on Aegina (Basch 1986; see also Sakkas, this volume), scenes that unequivocally depict maritime combat first emerge at Kynos in the 12th century BCE



Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in the text (map by the author).

(Dakoronia 1990, 1999, 2006) and, after a relatively brief hiatus, reappear in Attic funerary iconography during the Middle Geometric period (MG, ca. 850–760 BCE; see below).

Since no significant morphological or constructional differences can be observed in the representations of ships between the two periods (Dakoronia 1990, 118; Eder and Lemos 2020, 137), it may be argued that shipbuilding traditions were not entirely abandoned in the transition from the LBA to the EIA. Likewise, there is evidence that knowledge of established sea routes was not forgotten (Stampolidis 2003, 45; Eder and Lemos 2020, 137, 147). From the perspective of both shipbuilding and seafaring, therefore, the basic conditions for maritime travel were present from the early phases of the EIA, making the possibility of seaborne raiding and piracy entirely plausible.

Scholarly views on the interpretation of Attic Geometric ship scenes vary and are discussed more fully below. It should nevertheless be stressed at the outset that, as Geoffrey Kirk (1949, 140) observed, it is reasonable to assume that vase painters depicted types of ships with which they were at least somewhat familiar. A segment of the consumers who shaped demand likely also contributed to the establishment of such imagery, perhaps wishing to associate their own self-perception with these scenes, either because they actually took part in analogous activities or because these scenes were associated with the display of a particular status. Even if one accepts the view advanced by some scholars that these scenes draw on mythological or epic tradition (see Kirk 1949, 146; Moore 2000, 23), the selection of specific myths at this particular historical moment and for the relatively brief period in which they appear points to an underlying relationship with contemporary social realities.

Expressions of warrior identity

Warrior burials furnished with weapons and grave goods imported from the east or the west attest to a sustained concern with the display of martial status, a concern that continues into the later stages of the EIA and reflects clear continuity with Mycenaean practices (Whitley 2002, 227; Lemos 2014, 178–79; Eder and Lemos 2020, 136; Emanuel 2021, 301). The number of these burials, along with their broad spatial and chronological distribution, points to a pervasive warrior ethos that occupied a central place in EIA society, where warfare and martial prowess appear to have commanded considerable prestige (Eder and Lemos 2020, 136).

This emphasis on the warrior's identity is particularly significant because it resonates closely with the social position of the raider, whether operating on land or at sea. The absence of a specific term for “pirate” during this period (de Souza 1999, 9), together with the lack of a strict conceptual separation between terrestrial and maritime raiding, effectively situates piracy within a broader spectrum of predatory behavior. For example, Telemachus' attitude toward the booty that his father had seized (*Od.* 1.397–398) and Odysseus' explicit declaration that he intended to recover the losses inflicted on his *oikos* by the suitors through acts of plunder (*Od.* 23.356–358) indicate that such actions were neither prohibited nor unusual for members of the upper social stratum; if anything, they formed an accepted part of elite conduct (this issue is examined more fully in Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming).

When one also considers that these same groups were responsible for most long-distance contacts and trade activities, and that the roles of trader and pirate often converged (see, for example, the contributions of A. Ladas, V. Samaras and K. Tsonakas in this volume), it becomes plausible that individuals who embraced raiding on land could apply similar practices at sea. Their participation in maritime predation may therefore be viewed not as an aberration but as an extension of attitudes and behaviors embedded in the social and economic strategies of the period.

Raiding and social norms in the Homeric epics

The reference above to the attitudes of Telemachus and Odysseus toward acts of plunder brings the Homeric epics into the discussion of the elements that render the EIA Aegean an ideal context for the development of intensive pirate activity. Although the epics cannot be treated as historical sources in a strict sense, it would be unwise to disregard them, since they offer valuable insights both generally and, more specifically, regarding piracy. In the *Odyssey* in particular, raiding is presented as a recognized practice within Homeric society and one undertaken by nearly all social groups (Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming). Engagement in such activities does not attract moral condemnation; rather, it confers social esteem, admiration and material gain, as clearly illustrated in Odysseus' narrative to Eumaeus (*Od.* 14.235–239). The poems also introduce groups who habitually incline toward piracy, such as the Taphians (*Od.* 15.425–429, 16.426–430) and the Phoenicians (*Od.* 15.415–484).

The characters of the epics transcend simple moral binaries (good versus bad, sanctioned versus disapproved, straightforwardness versus cunning) and are grounded in their society, while simultaneously shaping it through exemplary models. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the *Odyssey*, through Odysseus' invented persona as the son of Castor from Crete and through the figures of the Phoenician traders, offers one of the earliest literary representations of the archetypal pirate, complete with the defining traits of *mêtis* [μήτις], irregular and asymmetric action, courage, greed, deception and opportunism.

To conclude this discussion of the context of the EIA Aegean, the factors outlined above (trade, fortified settlements, iconography, warrior burials and the Homeric epics) and, importantly, their entanglement in a constellation with social, political and economic implications, constitute not merely a well-founded hypothesis, but a strong basis for accepting the presence of piracy. When the geography of the Aegean and the long-standing persistence of piracy until well into later periods are also considered, it becomes especially reasonable to consider

pirate activity a given in the EIA Aegean. On the premise of this largely secure assumption, the following section undertakes a re-examination of selected archaeological evidence derived from settlement remains, funerary contexts and iconographic representations. References to the Homeric epics accompany the discussion where relevant.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR PIRACY IN THE EARLY IRON AGE AEGEAN

Settlements, fortifications and potential pirate bases

Recognizing pirate bases: Criteria and limitations

Alexandra Hartnett and Shannon Lee Dawdy (2013, 39) articulate a set of heuristic criteria intended to support the archaeological identification of piracy, with the aim of stimulating the emergence of a more systematic analytical field dedicated to the phenomenon. In recognition of the interpretive constraints inherent in such inquiries, they propose a series of potential diagnostic markers for identifying a settlement as a pirate base or haven. These markers include the presence of defensive architecture, evidence of destruction or abandonment in settlements, pronounced heterogeneity in the provenance and economic value of artifacts, elevated frequencies of luxury items, weaponry, drinking vessels, and other materially expressive categories (Hartnett and Dawdy 2013, 41). A comparable logic underlies the criteria advanced by Samaras (2015, 191–92), which have more recently been formalized by the research team of the A.P.Pir.A. project (see Samaras, this volume). Yet, as stressed in the introduction to this volume, the construction and deployment of such heuristic frameworks must be approached with methodological circumspection. Overreliance on these criteria or an inflated sense of their diagnostic capacity, risks engendering premature or overstated interpretations, an epistemic hazard that remains central to any attempt to delineate piracy archaeologically.

Vathy Limenari and other possible pirate bases

Vathy Limenari on Donousa is a small, fortified settlement of the MG period with a short lifespan, founded in the third quarter of the 9th century BCE and abandoned in the early 8th century BCE (Fig. 2). Situated along the maritime route that links Attica and Euboea with the Dodecanese, Cyprus and the Syro-Phoenician coast, the site's ceramic assemblage demonstrates its integration into local seafaring networks, indicating contacts with both the Cyclades and the Dodecanese. These observations led the excavator, Photeini Zapheirópoulou (1990, 52), to suggest that the settlement functioned as a trading post. Nevertheless, the limited duration of its occupation and, above all, the choice of a location seemingly unsuitable for habitation and with a secure yet very small harbor (rather than, for example, the larger and more convenient bays of the modern port or of Kedros; Fig. 3) prompted Kåre Fagerström (1988, 72, 147–48) and Vangelis Samaras (2015, 199) to argue that the site served as a pirate nest.

The case of Vathy Limenari is particularly significant because dozens of Geometric-period sites exhibit similar characteristics, although they have not yet been excavated or studied in comparable depth, making secure conclusions difficult to draw. This situation may eventually change with studies emerging from projects such as “The Small Cycladic Island Project” (SCIP; see Knodell et al. 2020, Athanasoulis et al. 2021) or from more focused regional investigations. For the present, however, the only observation that can safely be made concerns their geographical distribution along nodal points of the maritime routes dictated largely by the Aegean currents (Papageorgiou 2008, 204–9). Some of these sites, being obligatory passages for travelers, are well placed to function as trading posts or ports of call, as has been proposed not only for Vathy Limenari but also for other settlements such as Zagora on Andros (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 241), Kephala on Skiathos and additional sites situated along the western current linking northern Greece with Euboea (Mazarakis Ainian 2012a, 53–7).

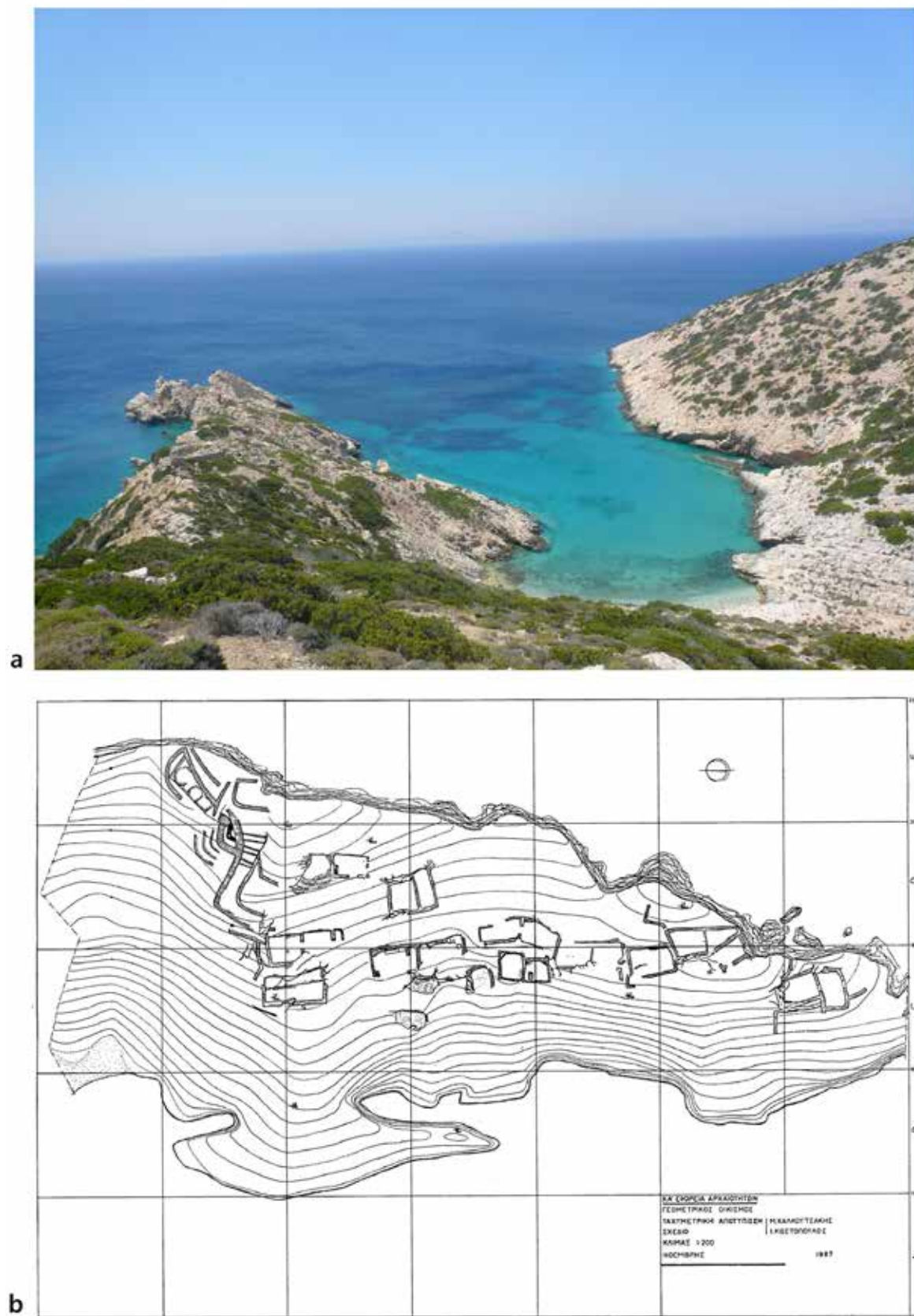


Fig. 2. Vathy Limenari, Donousa. (a) The promontory and the small harbor (photo by V. Samaras); (b) Plan of the site (Zapheiroupolou 1990, fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Donousa: locations of Vathy Limenari and the bays of Kedros and the modern harbor (map by the author).

Yet for precisely the same reasons, many of these locations are equally suitable as pirate bases or as points from which occasional raiding could be launched, particularly those situated at narrow passages created by islands, capes or strong currents (Hitchcock and Maeir 2016, 255). When favorable geographical conditions for pirate activity coincide with several of the criteria discussed earlier, certain sites emerge as plausible candidates for pirate bases.

One example that might be considered is Kipoula, located on the notorious Cap Grosso at the southern tip of the western coast of Mesa Mani, on the promontory known in antiquity as Thyrides (Strabo 8.2.2, 8.4.4, 8.5.1; Pausanias 3.25.9). The site was possibly inhabited in the LBA and certainly from the end of the EIA onward (Forster and Woodward 1906, 244–45; Waterhouse and Hope Simpson 1961, 123; Cavanagh et al. 1996, 304; Cartledge 2002, 111, 165). Although Kipoula has not been systematically investigated, its strategic location, the natural defensibility of the promontory and, above all, its position within a region with a long history of piracy (Krantonelli 1991, 13–14, 276, 279, 306) might suggest such a function.

Another compelling case is Choriza on Hydra, located on the island's northern coast and controlling the maritime corridor between the Saronic and Argolic Gulfs. Situated on a coastal hill and fortified, the site was occupied across several phases from the Mycenaean to the Hellenistic period (Xatzimixali 1965, 130; Lolos 2006). Adonis Kyrou (1990, 137–41; 1996–1997) has in fact advanced strong arguments that Choriza functioned as a pirate base during the Late Archaic period.

The case of Naooussa Bay on Paros

The bay of Naooussa on northern Paros was of strategic importance in the *longue durée* for Aegean seafarers and pirates. Its large size, strategic centrality within the Cyclades and proximity to the routes linking the eastern and western Aegean made it an especially attractive anchorage (Forsyth 2021, 510–11). Indicative of its suitability for



Fig. 4. The EIA sites in the bay of Naoussa, Paros (map by the author).

pirate activity is the marked presence of pirates in the bay during the 16th and 17th centuries (Koutzakiotis, this volume), while it has also been proposed that during the Postpalatial period (ca. 1200–1050 BCE) Koukounaries served, possibly as one among several roles, as a pirate base (Samaras 2015, 195–96).

During the EIA, the bay exhibits intensive settlement activity, particularly in the Late Geometric (LG, ca. 760–700 BCE) and Early Archaic (7th century BCE) periods. Numerous small sites developed at this time, many in sheltered or concealed and, in some cases, fortified positions. Among these are (arranged from west to east) Diakofto, Livadera, Koukounaries, Sarakinika, the islets of Oikonomou and Filizi, and Kargadoura (Samaras 2017, 115–30, with further bibliography; Fig. 4). Of particular interest is the islet of Filizi, which possesses a fortification system (Schilardi 1974, 186; 1975a, 209; 1975b, 95–6; 1980, 272) and occupies a nodal location that links Paros and Naxos as well as the northern and southern Cyclades. Systematic survey undertaken within the SCIP project confirms the islet's participation in a network of contacts during the LG and Archaic periods, involving regions of mainland Greece, the southeastern Aegean, and Cyprus (Knodell et al. 2020; Athanasoulis et al. 2021).

The EIA sites around the bay of Naoussa share several recurring characteristics: small size, proximity to the sea and natural defensibility and/or concealment, sometimes enhanced through fortification systems. Although only Koukounaries has been systematically excavated and the others are known primarily from surface surveys, initially by Demetrius Schilardi (e.g., 1973, 1975b) and more recently by SCIP (Knodell et al. 2020; Athanasoulis et al. 2021), these sites are nonetheless of particular importance for the study of piracy in the EIA Aegean. The combination of an apparent desire for proximity to the sea and a simultaneous concern for protection renders equally plausible the possibilities of active involvement in piracy, fear of pirate attacks or, perhaps most likely, a combination of both.

Excavated island settlements

In the case of excavated EIA settlements in the Aegean, such as Zagora (Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 1992; Descœudres and Paspalas 2012) and Hypsele on Andros (Televantou 2008, 2012), Emporio on Chios (Boardman 1967; Archontidou 2003) and Kephala on Skiathos (Mazarakis Ainian 2012a; Mazarakis Ainian and Alexandridou 2022; Mazarakis Ainian and Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 2022), the usual constraints of limited archaeological visibility or the absence of published material do not apply. These island sites occupy strategic locations and appear to have played, to varying degrees, the role of nodes within local and supra-local maritime networks. They also possess natural defensibility, often reinforced by artificial fortification. As expected, both excavators and subsequent scholars generally interpret the choice of inaccessible locations and the construction of fortification systems as responses to the need for security and protection, most often against threats originating from the sea (e.g., Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 241; Snodgrass 2006, 339; Kourou 2011, 400), although inland dangers have not always been ruled out, as in the cases of Zagora and Hypsele (Televantou 2012, 87).

Furthermore, material from these sites attests contact with several regions of the Aegean and the Greek mainland (see, for example, about Zagora: Cambitoglou et al. 1988, 241; Beaumont 2012, 53; about Kephala: Mazarakis Ainian 2012a; Alexandridou 2025; about Koukounaries: Schilardi 2012, 93; about Hypsele: Televantou 2012, 87). For these particular sites, commercial interpretations tend to dominate overwhelmingly over alternative possibilities, even though the finds could, in reality, have reached their destinations through a variety of mechanisms. Although the present paper does not suggest that all EIA island sites in the Aegean should be regarded as pirate bases, the possibility cannot be dismissed that some of the sites traditionally understood as trading posts or primary commercial actors may have been more closely connected with piracy than previously assumed, whether through active participation or through more passive forms of involvement.

Naval encounters in Geometric iconography

Attic funerary vases and sea-combat scenes

In a period such as the EIA, it is difficult to imagine the absence of ship chases and confrontations occurring either at sea or on vessels drawn up on the shore. Although this aspect of EIA maritime reality is extremely challenging to approach archaeologically, the iconography provides several compelling testimonies. Scenes depicting clashes on board ships make their first appearance in the MG period and increase markedly in the LG (Moore 2000, 20). Most of the examples currently available come from the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens and are found on vessels used as grave markers or as grave goods.

These ship-combat scenes constitute a particularly intriguing corpus which, in whole or in part, has been included in studies now considered classic for their contribution to early Attic iconography (e.g., Kirk 1949; Marwitz 1961; Ahlberg 1971; Grunwald 1983; Moore 2000). The interpretations traditionally proposed link this iconographic theme either to episodes drawn from epic or mythological narratives, or to the Athenian naucreries (for the Athenian naucreries, see Schubert 2008; Figueira 2011), or to the possibility that the deceased met his death in a naval engagement, or even to the putative emergence of the Athenian navy (these views are summarized and discussed by Kirk (1949, 144–45), who supported the latter interpretation; see also Moore 2000, 23).

More recent studies have sought to situate these scenes within the historical context of the Geometric period. Barbara Bohen (2017, 90–5), drawing on Herodotus (5.85.1–87.2), argues that all related examples from the Kerameikos were prompted by the Athenian defeat at the hands of the Aeginetans and Argives on the island of Aegina. On the contrary, Samaras (2015, 196–98) maintains that the increasingly frequent appearance of naval combat imagery in EIA ceramic iconography is connected to a parallel intensification of pirate activity.

Interpreting sea-raiding and maritime violence

The explicit association of these pictorial scenes with piracy is largely absent from scholarly discussions (with Samaras 2015 appearing to be the sole exception, insofar as can be ascertained). Kirk (1949, 145), however, briefly invokes the phenomenon when he considers the possibility that they depict “the activities of individual trader-privateers” or “the repelling of pirates from the Attic coasts.” He ultimately rejects this view, arguing that it is difficult to assume that the attackers (the crew of the ship) could be pirates. His reasoning rests on the idea that, since the outcome of the engagements in the relevant examples appears favorable for the attackers, they must be the protagonists of the depiction. In other words, he does not consider pirates worthy of being represented as victors or as central figures in a visual narrative. He further argues that pirate raids had disappeared by the late 8th century BCE, since the Homeric references to such activities are, in his view, “presumably archaizing.”

Regarding the claim that pirates cannot be the protagonists of pictorial representations, Kirk’s position reflects a negative attitude toward piracy that need not have applied during the period under discussion. As noted above, in the *Odyssey* raiding, whether on land or at sea, is not consistently construed in negative terms. In fact, the moral value attached to raiding varies considerably depending on the circumstances (Samaras and Gounelas forthcoming). More than once the heroes appear neutral or even receptive to the practice, as in the case of Nestor, who extends hospitality to Telemachus before asking whether he and his companions were traders or pirates (*Od.* 3.71–74; see also van Wees 1992, 214; Jackson 1995, 97; Luraghi 2006, 33). Even more strikingly, Odysseus’ self-presentation as the son of Castor from Crete vividly illustrates that a life grounded in raids and plunder could confer status, prestige and social acceptance (*Od.* 14.235–239; Emanuel 2017, 37–8).

As for the claim that Homer’s references are archaizing, even if one accepts that Odysseus’ narrative or the episodes involving the Phoenicians and the Taphians (for the Taphian pirates, see Vikatou and Staikou, this volume) reflect earlier societies, such as those of the Postpalatial, Submycenaean or Protogeometric Aegean, it remains unclear why those societies should be considered more receptive to piracy than that of the Geometric period. As already noted, the archaeological evidence, and especially the warrior burials discussed below, indicates that warfare maintained a central role during the EIA (Eder and Lemos 2020, 136). Signs of status and social position continued to uphold broadly similar values and it is therefore plausible that practices associated with raiding and theft did not disappear, even if their intensity and frequency may have changed.

The New York krater MMA 34.11.2

Many of the Attic Geometric depictions of warriors and shipboard confrontations are of considerable interest in the discussion on piracy in the EIA Aegean, although a detailed examination of the entire corpus lies beyond the scope of this study. The analysis, therefore, focuses primarily on a pedestaled krater in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) in New York (object number 34.11.2), which stands as one of the most important examples for the present inquiry.

The krater MMA 34.11.2 originates from Attica and undoubtedly comes from a funerary context (Fig. 5). Although some scholars have proposed an early LG date (e.g., Bohen 2017, 90), the majority place it in the later phase of MG II, probably toward the end of the first quarter of the 8th century BCE (ca. 780 BCE; see Moore 2000, 13, 18–20). The handle zone consists of a metope-triglyph band decorated with various geometric motifs, while the central metope on each side portrays a prothesis scene and the handle spandrels contain mourners. Below this zone runs a frieze in which two warships alternate with two processions of warriors (for detailed descriptions, see Marwitz 1961, 40–4; Ahlberg 1971, 29–30; Moore 2000, 13–8).

The frieze can be read as a true narrative showing two successive stages of a single episode (Fig. 6). On Side A, the opening phase of the encounter is depicted: The fighting takes place on a ship that has been beached, as indicated by the warrior attempting to board the enemy vessel while threatened by an archer standing on the prow, where four spears are also shown ready for use. At the stern, a hand-to-hand clash between two warriors



Fig. 5. New York krater [MMA 34.11.2](#).

is already underway. Side B illustrates the final moments of the conflict, as the ship appears poised to depart. The helmsman, presumably having fought earlier alongside his companions, has now taken his position and the sail has been raised. The spears at the prow have been used and a final skirmish seems to be unfolding on board, near the stern.

Two details on Side B are particularly significant for the interpretation of this krater within the context of piracy. The first concerns the two Dipylon shields resting on the deck on either side of the sail. According to Christiane Grunwald (1983, 181), these shields were placed there for use by the crew, much like the spears on Side A. Yet if the frieze is read narratively, with Side A preceding Side B, this interpretation becomes difficult to sustain, since the fighting is already concluding and the shields would almost certainly have been employed. A more convincing view is that the shields represent part of the booty seized by the ship's crew (Ahlberg 1971, 29; Moore 2000, 24).

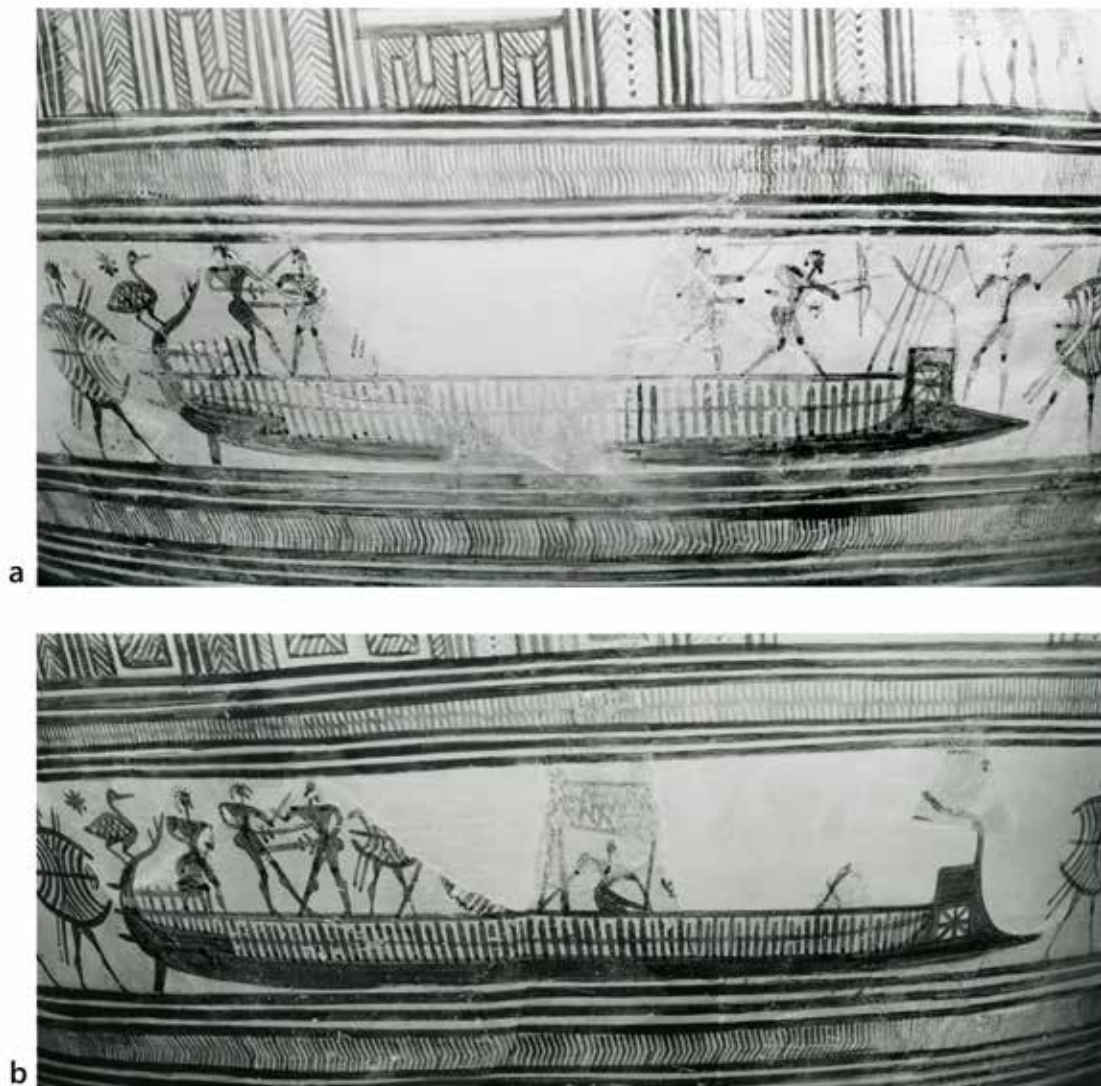


Fig. 6. New York krater [MMA 34.11.2](#). (a) Side A: opening phase of the encounter; (b) Side B: final moments of the conflict.

Closely connected to this point is the second detail: the human figure depicted beneath the sail. This figure has generated considerable discussion due to the ambiguous rendering, posture and placement. Most scholars identify the figure as female on the basis of the treatment of the hair, while her posture has led them to argue that she is tied to the ship, which would explain her unusual position (e.g., Marwitz 1961, 43 n. 26; Ahlberg 1971, 28; Moore 2000, 24). Bohen (2017, 92), however, rejects both the identification as a woman and as a captive, suggesting instead that the figure is a crew member adjusting the sail. Yet, she does not offer a strong counterargument to the depiction of the hair, and the figure's placement directly beneath the sail would likely hinder rather than facilitate such an action (cf. the krater fragment Louvre A530, cited by Bohen herself, where the figures manipulating the sail stand some distance from it, near the stern). The interpretation of the figure as a fettered woman therefore remains the more persuasive, since her posture suggests a captive rather than a participant in ship handling.

If the figure is indeed a woman, the connection proposed by Bohen between the scene and the Athenian defeat by the Aeginetans and Argives is significantly weakened, as it is highly unlikely that the defeated Athenians would have taken booty and even more unlikely that they would have seized captives. By contrast, identifying

the crew as pirates is quite plausible: Having beached their vessel, they conducted a raid and were then counter-attacked by their victims. Such an interpretation accounts coherently for both the sequential stages shown on the two sides of the krater and the presence of the fettered woman, positioned between the two Dipylon shields, which likewise appear to represent spoils.

Interpreting the scene as a pirate raid strongly recalls the initially successful attack by Odysseus and his companions in the land of the Cicones, after which the Cicones regrouped and launched a counterattack. This resulted in a fierce battle at the Achaeans' ships, during which the latter were defeated, many of their men died and the survivors barely escaped (*Od.* 9.39–52). In that same episode, it is explicitly stated that the Achaeans seized women as part of their booty (*Od.* 9.41) and in several other raiding narratives in the Homeric poems women likewise appear among the spoils (e.g., *Od.* 14.264; 15.425–429). The seizure of women, which likely occurs already in the Early Bronze Age (Giagkoudaki, this volume), was among the principal motives for pirate raids across the Aegean; the EIA would hardly have been an exception.

The New York krater is not the only vessel depicting combat on a ship grounded along the shore (see, for example, the Copenhagen oinochoe 1628 (Kirk 1949, 111; Ahlberg 1971, 29–31; Coldstream 2008, 76–7, with further bibliography)), yet it is perhaps one of the most instructive examples for the study of EIA piracy. While the possibility cannot be excluded that shipborne attacks and ensuing clashes belonged to military operations with political or strategic aims, it appears increasingly likely that the relevant Geometric iconography is more closely connected with piracy than previous discussions have generally allowed.

Warrior burials and maritime identities

Warfare, status and the possibility of piracy

Warrior burials have been found across numerous regions throughout the EIA. Their defining feature is the presence of weapons, although the wealth and range of grave goods, as well as the type and combination of weapons, vary according to period and area. Scholars generally interpret weapons in funerary contexts as indicators of prestige that affirm the elevated social status of the deceased (e.g., Whitley 2002, 227; Emanuel 2021, 301). At the same time, the practice is seen as a means of associating the dead with warfare, even when the possibility that the individual was not an active warrior remains under discussion (e.g., Whitley 2002, 219; Lloyd 2014, 2).

Regarding piracy, Emanuel explicitly links this phenomenon to weapon-bearing burials of the LBA. His assessment of the mortuary evidence for seafaring individuals of the time is particularly perceptive: “a role in piracy and other violent, predatory naval activities may certainly be posited, both for these individuals and for the societies they may have led” (Emanuel 2021, 304). The persistent difficulty of identifying archaeological markers that can be unambiguously connected to piracy does not preclude a similar interpretation for some EIA warrior burials.

Lefkandi: A re-examination of Tomb 79

A particularly illuminating case for the present discussion is Tomb 79 from Lefkandi, an early 9th-century BCE secondary cremation in which the ashes were deposited within a bronze cauldron (Fig. 7). The tomb was accompanied by a rich assemblage of offerings, some recovered in the niche and others in the shaft fill (Popham and Lemos 1995; 1996, 194–95, 197–205). The weaponry consists of a “killed” sword, a spearhead, two knives and approximately thirty-five arrowheads, all made of iron, with the sole exception of a single bronze arrowhead (Fig. 8). The ceramic component comprises two monumental kraters, at least six pendent-semicircle plates and a circle skyphos. Several imported vessels are also represented: two Attic Early Geometric II oinochoai with trefoil-shaped lip, three small Cypriot jugs and two Phoenician bichrome jugs, which count among the earliest examples of the type to reach the Aegean. Beyond weapons and pottery, the assemblage includes a bronze



Fig. 7. Tomb 79, Lefkandi (Popham and Lemos 1996, pl. 36c).

weighing balance and sixteen stone weights, two bronze earrings, a bronze grater and a North Syrian cylinder seal dated to approximately 1800 BCE (Figs. 8–9).

The question of the deceased's origin has attracted sustained scholarly attention, shaped in large measure by the exceptional character of the assemblage. The excavators viewed the individual as a member of the local Euboean community, noting that both the tomb's construction and much of its ceramic repertoire align with established Lefkandi practices (Popham and Lemos 1995). This interpretation was followed, explicitly or implicitly, in subsequent studies, which regard the combination of local pottery with Cypriot and Near Eastern imports, together with the set of stone weights, as indicative of an Euboean figure deeply engaged in eastern exchange networks rather than a foreign resident (Kroll 2008; Kourou 2012, 219; Mazarakis Ainian 2012b, 77, 79). The opposite view has been proposed in some studies, which argue that the pronounced Near Eastern component of the assemblage, including the Phoenician and Cypriot vessels and the North Syrian cylinder seal, may point to an Eastern (most likely a Phoenician) individual settled at Lefkandi (Papadopoulos 1996, 159; 1997, 192 (see, however, Papadopoulos 2011, 115, 119); Antonaccio 2002, 29; Coldstream 2007; Nijboer 2008). More recent assessments adopt a more nuanced perspective, interpreting the tomb as the product of an interregional milieu in which local traditions and eastern associations intersected, thereby allowing for a prominent figure, whose sustained involvement with the eastern Mediterranean does not in itself determine whether his origin was Euboean or foreign (Arrington 2016, 19; Crielaard 2016, 61–2; Bourogiannis 2018, 54–5).

In contrast to the question of origin, the social identity of the deceased has not generated comparable scholarly debate. The excavators characterized him as a *warrior-trader*, an individual whose combined weaponry, multi-regional ceramic assemblage and weighing equipment suggested both military prowess and active participation in exchange circuits (Popham and Lemos 1995), or even a Homeric *xenos* (Lemos 2003, 191–92, in response to Papadopoulos 1997 and Antonaccio 2002). The warrior-trader profile has been adopted in several subsequent discussions, which regard the tomb as reflecting a figure who operated at the intersection of martial authority and economic agency and is often viewed as an elite member engaged in the long-distance

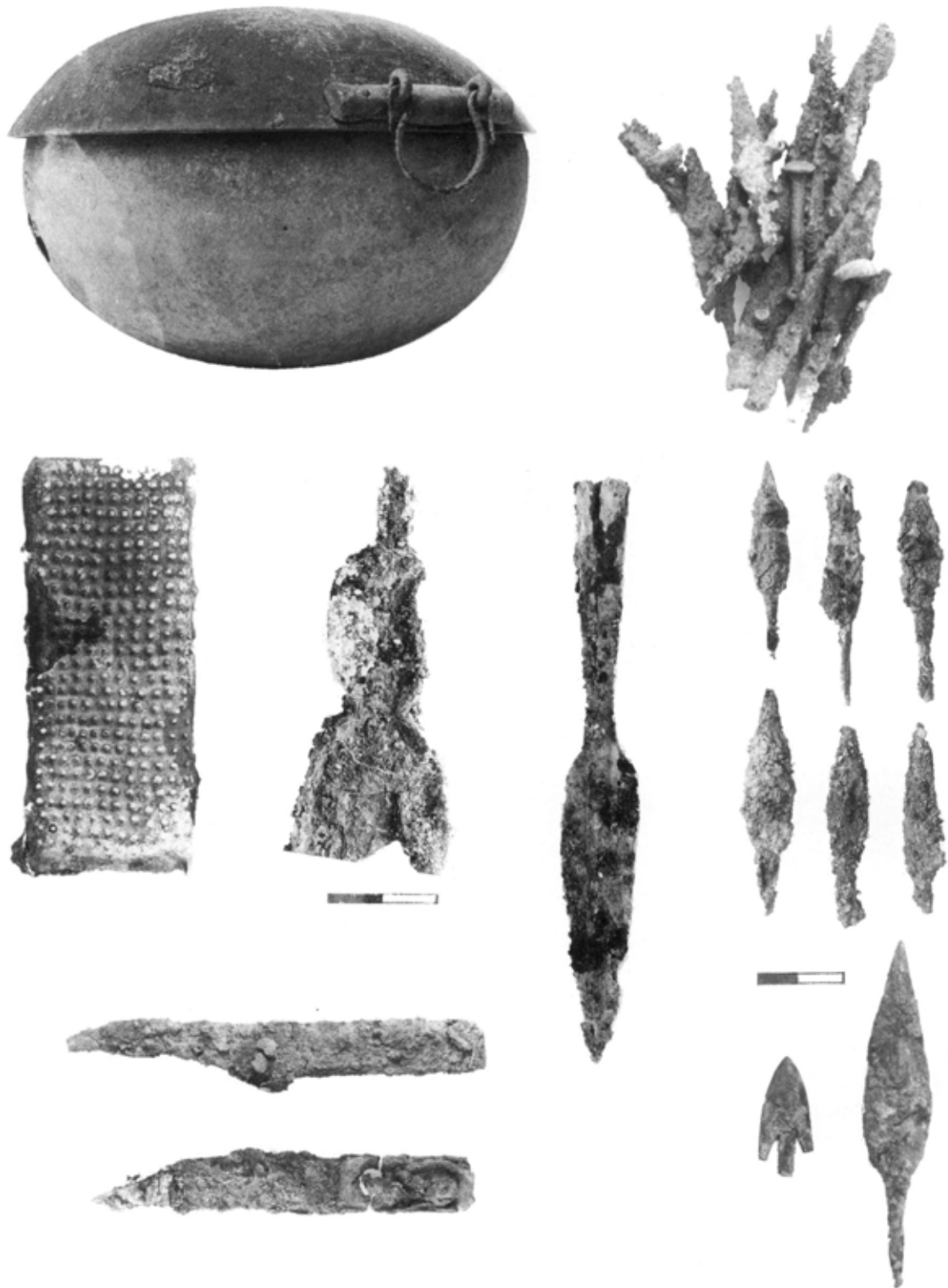


Fig. 8. Funerary assemblage from Tomb 79, Lefkandi: cauldron, grater and weapons (after Popham and Lemos 1996, pl. 78).

interaction networks of the period (see, for example, Kourou 2012, 219; Mazarakis Ainian 2012b, 77, 79; Arrington 2016, 16, 19; Bourogiannis 2018, 54). A perceptive interpretation is offered by Carla Antonaccio (2002, 29), who suggested that the assemblage, with its blend of Euboean and eastern elements, is consistent with an individual functioning as a *proxenos*, that is, a diplomatic mediator settled at Lefkandi and serving the interest of a community from the eastern Mediterranean.

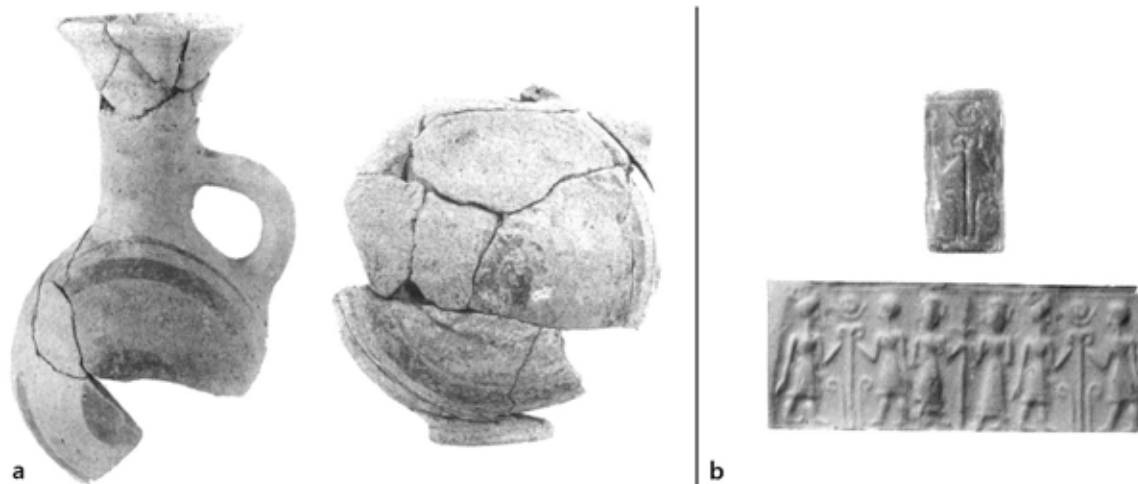


Fig. 9. Funerary assemblage from Tomb 79, Lefkandi: (a) Phoenician bichrome jugs; (b) North Syrian cylinder seal (after Popham and Lemos 1996, pl. 79).

Given the widespread acceptance that Tomb 79 at Lefkandi represents a figure whose activities included warfare and long-distance mobility, it is striking that piracy has remained almost absent from the discussion. Only Luraghi (2006, 34) has ventured to replace the term *warrior* with *pirate* and to draw an explicit connection between such warrior-traders and the world of raiding and piracy. Indeed, if warfare is understood to coexist with trade, as the warrior-trader category suggests, it becomes difficult to imagine circumstances in which such an individual would not also have been involved in pirate activities. Even if such circumstances existed, there is little reason to assume that they constituted the norm rather than the exception.

It should be underscored that, as in any comparable case, the aim is not to identify an individual who was exclusively a pirate. Yet, within a broader context characterized by the scarcity of direct indicators, Tomb 79 offers eloquent testimony that a person engaged in trade and long-distance travel may have undertaken pirate raids, given that objects from other regions accompanied him in death alongside weighing equipment and, notably, his weapons. Based on this burial, it does not seem unwarranted to propose that when, in the EIA Aegean, evidence appears for individuals, who combined martial equipment with indications of extensive seafaring and exchange, it is plausible that such persons may have participated in forms of violent acquisition that accompanied or underpinned their trading operations.

The bronze grater in Tomb 79, considered together with the rest of the assemblage, may also be relevant here, as similar objects have been found in other 9th-century BCE burials at Lefkandi that likewise contained weapons (Ridgway 1997, 325; Antonaccio 2002, 22–3). According to David Ridgway (1997), these items were used in the preparation of a drink of the kind described in the *Iliad*, where Hekamede mixes goat's cheese into wine for Nestor and his companions using a bronze grater (*κνήστι χαλκείῃ*; *Il.* 11.639–640; see also *Od.* 10.234). Despite the reservations expressed by Susan Sherratt (2004, 208, 213), the association of such objects with wine consumption has been broadly accepted (e.g., West 1998, 191; Antonaccio 2002, 22).

Considerable attention has been devoted to the role of wine-drinking and feasting as mechanisms for strengthening bonds within Postpalatial and Homeric society (see, for example, Sherratt 2004, 188, 211; Maran 2012, 129). Hitchcock and Maier (2016, 5; 2017, 150–53) have emphasized the significance of feasting as ritual practice and of Mycenaean serving and drinking vessels as material symbols intended to reinforce collective identity among Sea Peoples communities during the LBA III. Within this broader context, and in light of the coexistence of the grater with weapons, it is worth considering whether this object may relate to feasting and wine-drinking practices that served to consolidate and renew bonds not only within a settled social group, but also within a smaller circle of individuals involved in maritime mobility, trade and warfare, even pirate raids.



Fig. 10. Ship-shaped firedogs from Argos (Spathari 1995, fig. 77).

Ship-shaped firedogs

Another noteworthy class of objects that may be situated within the same interpretive framework as the graters comprises the iron spits and the ship-shaped firedogs, which likewise occur in Geometric warrior burials and are associated with feasting practices, since they were intended for roasting meat. Examples of this type have so far been recovered from Argos (Courbin 1957, 368–85; Coldstream 2003, 125–26), Crete (Boardman 1971; Coldstream and Catling 1996, 575, 591–92, 720; Vonhoff 2011, 146–47; see also Kotsonas 2008, 284, 317, with further bibliography) and Cyprus (Tandy 1997, 157–58), and all are approximately contemporary, dating to the late 8th/early 7th century BCE (Fig. 10).

Most scholars accept that these artifacts are indicators of status and that, by virtue of their form, they establish a symbolic association between themselves (and through them the deceased) and the sea (e.g., Courbin 1957, 384–85; Buchholz 1991, 76–8; Tandy 1997, 161–65; Vonhoff 2011, 150; contra Déonna 1959). Moreover, their inclusion in burials furnished with weapons leaves little doubt as to their placement within a warrior-identity context. In this light, their role within the funerary assemblage appears to extend beyond mere functionality, operating instead as visual statements about social position and modes of life. The interpretation that views these firedogs as symbols of a seafaring warrior, who forged essential bonds with his companions, not only through the communal consumption of wine but also through the sharing of roasted meat, is therefore compelling. As emerges from the foregoing discussion, this seafaring warrior can plausibly be understood, at least in the context of the EIA Aegean, to have engaged in activities that amount to piracy.

A consideration for the future: Calibrating grave assemblages

As discussed above, Tomb 79 at Lefkandi represents one of the few favorable cases available to the scholar of piracy in the EIA Aegean. Although artifacts or assemblages that clearly suggest identities or activities surpassing a basic warrior attribution are exceptional, this scarcity should not discourage the search for possible traces of

piracy. Since in the EIA, as in any other period, the burial of an individual, whose activities included piracy, did not differ in any essential way from the burials of other people inhabiting the same region and era, the archaeology of piracy should adopt innovative methodological approaches in order to overcome the persistent difficulties of linking specific archaeological finds to the phenomenon of piracy and to make effective use of the limited relevant evidence.

Using Tomb 79 at Lefkandi as an illustrative case, it may be argued that it would be worthwhile attempting a calibration of its entire grave-goods assemblage to assess the relative weight of each item, both individually and in combination with the others, regarding its potential association with piracy. The systematic implementation of this idea lies beyond the scope of the present study, although certain preliminary observations may be offered here. In such a calibration, the presence of weapons would understandably serve as a fundamental criterion, while imported items would further enhance the evaluative index. The weighing equipment, however, would be of greatest significance in this instance (see Kroll 2008, 38, on the importance of balance weights not only for the interpretation of piracy but also for other activities), since it points most clearly to the deceased's involvement in trade. A similar line of reasoning has prompted scholars such as Jung (2009, 73–5), Hitchcock and Maeir (2017, 257) and Emanuel (2021, 301) to propose that the mixture of Aegean and central Mediterranean grave goods, including a substantial number of weapons, in LBA IIIB/C Tomb 21 at Langada on Kos may indicate a possible “pirate identity” for the deceased. It is not unlikely that a systematic calibration of grave assemblages from regions and periods conducive to pirate activity will in future reveal additional potential pirate burials.

PIRACY IN THE EARLY IRON AGE AEGEAN

Occasionality, opportunism and fluid maritime roles

The attempt to identify the exclusively pirate individual, the purely pirate settlement or the strictly pirate artifact tends to hinder rather than facilitate the examination of piracy, particularly in the EIA. If the interpretive focus shifts from fixed social roles (such as pirate or trader, aggressor or victim) to more fluid forms of maritime identity, a clearer interpretive space opens for recognizing the situational nature of pirate behavior. Opportunism and occasionality emerge as key concepts for understanding and detecting the phenomenon of piracy. These concepts are shaped by, and at the same time arise from, objective conditions, including for example the periods in which seafaring in the Aegean was possible, since maritime activity occurred only then and thus opportunities for pirate action could materialize only within that temporal window. At the same time, and more importantly, they are closely connected to the contingencies of maritime life and to a mindset oriented towards the exploitation of opportunity. This is why, in the *Odyssey*, rulers, household leaders, traders and many others raid whenever conditions allow, acting opportunistically and when the likelihood of minimal cost is in their favor. Similar behavior may be expected from groups not explicitly mentioned in the epics, such as humble fishermen or others regularly engaged with the maritime sphere.

On this basis, no restrictions seem to arise regarding the social position of a potential pirate. Such an individual could come from any part of the social spectrum and could hold multiple, context-dependent roles and occupations (see, for example, Tsoumakis, this volume, for the LBA seafarers). Those who possessed martial skill, nautical knowledge and leadership ability were, however, better equipped to confront the difficulties inherent in such a way of life (Hitchcock and Maeir 2016, 252–54, for a discussion of the skills required of pirates). Yet individuals of this sort appear across all social strata and perhaps especially among the more elevated ones, such as those buried in graves comparable to Tomb 79 at Lefkandi or those who made use of vessels like the New York krater. These groups also possessed the resources necessary for building and maintaining ships.

It should nevertheless be noted that the concepts of occasionality and opportunism do not pertain exclusively to individuals, but may also apply to settlements. Even if many island and coastal sites functioned as trade posts or ports of call, they could at the same time engage in pirate activities, particularly during periods of intensified

trade or heightened maritime mobility. Their trading role does not preclude the possibility of concurrent pirate activity, since such actions would not have been indiscriminate but selective, directed at targets capable of yielding a return and unlikely to jeopardize their trade interests.

The tactics and timing of Early Iron Age piracy

Regarding pirate tactics, the passages from the *Odyssey* mentioned above highlight a particular mode of action: bringing the ships ashore and subsequently launching a raid inland. It is worth asking whether it is a coincidence that certain 8th-century BCE images depict precisely this mode of operation. If the view that coastal raiding constituted the predominant, if not exclusive, form of maritime attack at least until this century is correct (Raaflaub 1999, 129, 131), then the practice defined here as piracy may in fact have been more typical than exceptional. In any case, the similarities between the practices described in the epics and those depicted in the iconography should not be attributed to the direct illustration of specific epic episodes, as was commonly proposed in earlier scholarship. A more convincing explanation is that poets and vase painters were responding to, and refracting through their media, the lived realities of their time.

As for the intensity of the phenomenon during the EIA, the available evidence does not yet permit firm conclusions. Even so, it has been aptly suggested that, after the LBA IIIC period, piracy may have re-emerged in the 9th century BCE and reached a peak in the following century, in parallel with the expansion in maritime activity and the rising number of depictions of sea battles on pottery, which begin in MG and increase during LG times (Samaras 2015, 199–200). The early part of this chronological frame, namely the second quarter and the middle of the 9th century BCE, includes Tomb 79 at Lefkandi and other burials from the same cemetery that also combine graters and weapons, while the majority of ship-shaped firedogs belong to the subsequent period of intensification, appearing primarily in funerary assemblages of the late 8th century BCE (Tandy 1997, 156; though examples from Crete appear already in the 9th century BCE, see Kotsonas 2008, 317).

A closing note

None of the categories of material evidence discussed above can, on its own, decisively advance the investigation of piracy in the EIA Aegean. Considered in isolation, each is more likely to lead to analytical dead ends. Yet it is their examination in conjunction and their integration within both the historical context of the EIA and the long-term trajectory of piracy in the Aegean that render the phenomenon a matter of genuine significance for understanding the period's maritime realities. Piracy emerges not as a marginal curiosity but as a structurally embedded feature of EIA seafaring, one that becomes visible only when disparate strands of evidence are brought into concert. However challenging its study may be, it remains incumbent upon the scholar not only to explore every opportunity to examine this phenomenon, but, above all, to avoid consigning it to invisibility through silence.



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From Homer's Taphians to the Pirates of Ayia Mavra

Exploring the Legacy of Piracy in the Central Ionian Sea

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ABSTRACT

The geomorphology of Lefkada and the Inner Ionian Archipelago, with their rugged coastlines, intricate network of islands, and strategic location along important trade routes, have significantly impacted the region's maritime history. The prevalence of piracy has also left some traces on these islands. The recent discovery of Late Helladic tumuli, a fortification wall and a prehistoric settlement at Meganisi has shed new light on the Taphians mentioned by Homer. According to legend, the Taphians were renowned for their seafaring skills and piracy. The discovery of these archaeological sites provides important new insights into the Taphians' way of life and the extent of their influence in the region.

Written sources suggest the constant presence of pirates in the Ionian Sea, which posed a serious threat to trade. The ancient ports played an essential role in the region's maritime history, and there must have been numerous hideouts for pirates in the broader network of the small islands like Atokos, Arkoudi, Echinades, Kythros, Kastos and Kalamos. The long-standing presence of pirates in the restless waters of the central Ionian Sea is well-documented since the castle of Ayia Mavra in Lefkada became an infamous pirate's nest during early modern times.

INTRODUCTION

Piracy, which can be defined as armed robbery involving the use of ships (de Souza 1999, 1), has been a pervasive issue throughout history, and the ancient world was no exception. Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea were hotspots of piracy in antiquity, and it is a topic that has captivated scholars and historians for centuries (e.g., Gabbert 1986; Ormerod 1924; de Souza 1999; Beek 2006; Konstam 2008; Emilio-Ioannidou 2017).

This paper seeks to explore the evolution of piracy in the broader region of Lefkada, the Inner Ionian Archipelago, Echinades islands and the opposite Akarnanian coast, with an emphasis on the prehistoric times. Our finds strongly support the research regarding piracy in the Mediterranean Sea and more specifically in the Aegean during prehistory (see for example Hitchcock and Maeir 2018). The strategic position of Lefkada along crucial maritime trade routes, the geomorphology of Meganisi with its lace-like shores, and the complex network of small islands in the Inner Ionian Archipelago have significantly influenced the maritime history of the broader region. Given the potential impact of piracy on these islands, there is a possibility that

archaeological remnants associated with piracy may be present. Therefore, a comprehensive exploration of the available archaeological and historical records from this intricate landscape has the potential to enhance our understanding of piracy as a nuanced phenomenon substantially.

TAPHOS – THE LAND OF HOMERIC PIRATES

The Homeric poems constitute the earliest extant literary works depicting individuals and groups as pirates (*Od.* 16.424–430). While the poems express a measure of disapproval for piracy, they simultaneously illustrate the potential for a pirate to attain a higher social status through successful marauding. In essence, piracy was not regarded as intrinsically ignominious or objectionable in the Homeric world, reflecting the socio-cultural milieu of Homer's Greece. Furthermore, piracy and warfare were so inextricably intertwined in the Homeric universe that they were virtually indistinguishable.

Meganisi, situated east of Lefkada, occupies a maritime area amidst the western coast of Akarnania and the islands of Lefkada, Ithaca and Kephallonia. Within this region, numerous small islands and islets form the Teleboides and Echinades island groups. Meganisi, belonging to the Teleboides group, is commonly identified by scholars as the island referred to as *Taphos* in ancient texts (*Od.* 1.105, 1.181, 1.417–419, 14.453, 15.427, 16.426; Strabo 10.2.14, 10.2.20, 10.2.24). According to the Homeric tradition, this island served as a homeland for pirates and traders. The name itself suggests that it may have been associated with tombs. In the epic poems, capes and small islands positioned along sea passages were often linked to hero worship due to the proximity of heroic deaths (for example, Ajax Lokros in Mykonos, Leukos in Lefkada, and according to Homer, the tomb of Achilles in the Black Sea was visible to seafarers).

The Taphians are considered Leleges or Phoenicians, who arrived in the region with Cadmus from the East. Their main occupation seems to have been piracy in the southern Ionian region, as was the case with most tribes of the Leleges, who were settled in other coastal areas and were usually mentioned in tradition as formidable pirates (Vikatou 2019, 76–7).

Although only the Taphians are mentioned in the Homeric epics, in later writers they are associated with the Teleboans, another Lelegian tribe. According to Strabo (10.2.14, 10.2.20, 10.2.24), the Teleboans preceded the Taphians. Both tribes inhabited the coastal cities of Akarnania and, after being displaced by the Kephallenians, settled on the neighboring islands of Akarnania, primarily Taphos, which is located between Ithaca and Lefkada. However, it is possible that they represent the same tribe, initially known as the Teleboans and later as the Taphians (Vikatou 2019).

The first references to the Taphians can be found in the Homeric epics. In the *Odyssey*, they are portrayed as neighboring people of Odysseus' kingdom, who, apart from being pirates, were also skilled traders, traversing the Mediterranean Sea and competing even with the Phoenicians. In Book 1 (180–184), the king of the Taphians Mentos, the son of wise Anchialos and a friend of Odysseus, is mentioned. He travels to the city of Temese to exchange iron for copper. The epithet *φιλήρετμοι*, used by Mentos himself to describe his people, demonstrates that they were renowned rowers, indicating furthermore that they were a seafaring nation. Additionally, the term *ἀλλόθροοι*, meaning “speaking a different language”, implies their commercial activities with other people of the Mediterranean. In other parts of the *Odyssey*, the Taphians are referred to as *ληϊστορες* (15.427, 16.426; see also 14.452), indicating their piratical and plundering nature, as well as their involvement in the slave trade. Specifically mentioned is their abduction of a slave woman from the city of Sidon in Phoenicia (15.425–429).

In short, ancient sources offer indefinite testimonies regarding the Taphians-Teleboans and the islands they inhabited (see Vikatou 2019, 79). Among other information, we learn that the island of Taphos derived its name from the heroic first king of the seafaring Taphians, Taphios, brother of Teleboas. Later, Pterelaos, Taphios' son, extended his power to the surrounding islands and Kephallonia came under his rule. Its first inhabitants were named Taphians or Teleboans. The small islands of Kastos, Sparti, Skorpaios, Meganisi, Kalamos, etc., located

between Lefkada and the Akarnanian coast, took their names from the two brothers and were called Taphian or Teleboan Islands.

The mystery surrounding the people of Taphians and the exact location of the island is not easy to clarify, as the ambiguity observed in Homer and the limited amount of information regarding their origin and ancestry led to confusion and the formulation of many different opinions by later writers, including ancient ones (such as Strabo, Pliny the Elder, etc.). As a result, the search for Ithaca naturally prompted efforts to identify Taphos. Current research on the Homeric Taphos remains uncertain, with some scholars suggesting its placement in Kephallonia, where a region named *Taphios* exists, while others propose Meganisi or Kalamos as potential locations (see Vikatou 2019, 83–4). However, from the entirety of the testimonies, it is inferred that the Taphians, a piratical and trading people, dominated the Ionian Sea during the Mycenaean period, before the rise of the Kephallenians, when they constituted a powerful naval kingdom. According to myths, they did not hesitate to campaign against the Mycenaeans themselves, and they not only faced the powerful forces of that time but also required trickery to be defeated (see Vikatou 2019, 76).

THE PREHISTORY OF MEGANISI: INSIGHTS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

The earliest traces of human habitation on Meganisi date back to the Middle Paleolithic period, when the island was occasionally connected to Lefkada and the Akarnanian coasts due to geological changes during glacial and interglacial periods. The “Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago Archaeological Survey” project, conducted between 2010 and 2011 by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada in collaboration with the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Crete, yielded significant evidence of Neanderthal presence in the area (Galanidou et al. 2018). An ongoing excavation at the Panthera’s cave on the small island of Kythros brings to light many interesting Middle Paleolithic finds (Galanidou 2018). Another cave, located in the modern settlement of Spartochori, known as the Cyclops’ cave, was utilized as a habitation site during the Late Neolithic period and later witnessed cult activities during historical times (Benton 1931–1932, 232; Vikatou 2017a, 369).

In 2011, an island resident brought to attention the presence of seven tumuli, subsequently followed by a rescue archaeological investigation conducted by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada from 2011 to 2014. Our research revealed additionally ten more tumuli. Except for a tumulus at Kallinikato site, the rest were situated in the region of the Podi peninsula, located in the southeastern part of the island. Spanning an area of approximately 450,000 m², locally referred to as Messogalia, this landscape is characterized by steep, occasionally flat-topped hills intersected by streams (for more detailed information and specific references on the finds from Meganisi see Vikatou 2017a, 2017b, 2018).

The tumuli themselves consist of roughly circular mounds constructed from coarse stones, each housing a single cist grave positioned at its center (Fig. 1). Resembling cairns, these mounds lack dry stone enclosures that are typically delineated by natural rock formations, as they are founded upon the underlying bedrock. Ranging in diameter from 5.20 to 10 m, these tumuli have endured to a height of approximately 0.70 m.

The cist graves within the investigated area were meticulously carved into rock, and their interiors were lined on all four sides with stone slabs. In some instances, dry stone walls constructed from limestone slabs were erected atop the cist. The dimensions of the cists varied, with lengths ranging from 0.90 to 1.25 m, widths from 0.43 to 0.70 m, and heights reaching up to 1 m. Limestone slabs were placed over the cists to cover them.

In terms of burial practices, inhumation was the sole method observed, with the deceased placed directly on the natural bedrock in a contracted position. Most of the cists were found without their covers, indicating that they had been looted multiple times in the past, potentially even during ancient times. The excavation yielded limited skeletal remains and a few offerings, primarily fragments from stirrup jars. Regrettably, no



Fig. 1: The tumulus at Anemomylos site at Meganisi (photo from the Archive of the Ephorate of Aitolokarnania and Lefkada).

traces of decorative elements have survived due to their state of preservation. However, the recovered vessel types represent the “Western Koine” repertoire, which is also found in neighboring regions such as Achaia, Elis and Aitolokarnania. Among the offerings were several clay buttons and iron nails. In some instances, bronze artifacts had escaped the attention of looters (Fig. 2).

These artifacts include jewelry fragments (two earrings, three buckles, and a pin), a miniature chariot wheel, as well as bronze weapons, including a Naue II sword measuring 52.6 cm in length (from the Tomb Bairia 6), five spearheads, and two shield bosses. The presence of the sword and the shield bosses suggests that these tombs belonged to warriors. Additionally, two tombs contained fishing accessories (lead weights and a bronze hook) alongside the weapons, which does not contradict the martial identity of the deceased. The Naue II sword, categorized as group C, possesses two pairs of grooves running parallel to the blade’s edges, a feature observed in examples found in Achaia, Elis, Venice and Naxos, all dating to the Late Helladic (LH) IIIC Late (for further reading and references see Vikatou 2017a, 370). The discovery of the Naue II sword at Meganisi contributes to our understanding of their distribution across the Aegean region, confirming the existence of commercial connections with Achaia and the Italian peninsula. Furthermore, the flame-shaped spearheads with integrated cast sockets exemplify the “northern type”, while the prominently arched buckle displays Mycenaean characteristics (Vikatou 2017a, 370).

Among the cist graves, only three tumuli were found to be unlooted, while only two were intact. The first intact grave (Tumulus 9, Bairia locality) contained various grave goods, including two bronze clasps, two bronze arrowheads, a bronze hook, eight fragmented vessels, including stirrup jars, three necklace beads (one of which was made of steatite) and a bronze shield boss. The presence of shield bosses, which have also been found in Achaia dating to the LH IIIC period and Aitolia (Stamna) dating to the Protogeometric (PG) period, is noteworthy (Vikatou 2017a, 371). The stirrup jars discovered in the graves possess a conical and slightly spherical body shape, along with a tall knob on the disc. While their shape parallels examples from Achaia and Elis dating to the LH IIIC Late period, unfortunately their decorative elements have not survived (Vikatou 2017a, 371).



Fig. 2: Bronze artifacts from the tumuli at Meganisi (photo from the Archive of the Ephorate of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada).

The second intact cist grave belonged to a tumulus with a distinct form (Tumulus 8, Bairia locality). Its mound, constructed using rough stones and substantial amounts of soil, exhibited an oval shape and was founded on soft soil. Notably, the cist was positioned at the northeastern edge of the mound rather than in the center. This grave contained the burial of an adult male, interred in a contracted position with his gaze directed toward the mountains rather than the sea, contrary to expectations. Additionally, the bones of another burial were piled beside the head of the primary interment. Placed upon the body of the deceased, two amphorae of relatively low quality were found. The first amphora, with a neck handle, stood at a height of 31 cm and likely had a black glaze covering, albeit significantly damaged. The second amphora, with decorative knobs at the base of the shoulder, measured 41 cm in height. A reserved zone adorned the shoulder of the amphora, featuring concentric triangles and a wavy line. While precise details of the vessels' decorative motifs cannot be determined, their shapes and motifs exhibit close parallels with examples from Achaia and Elis, dating from the later stages of the LH IIIC Late period and extending into subsequent periods, such as the Submycenaean (SM) and PG (Vikatu 2017a, 371). In the hands of the deceased, a pair of bronze tweezers was discovered, and the head rested upon a small shield, with only the shield boss remaining as a testament to its existence.

The construction of the tumuli in Meganisi can be attributed to the island's abundant limestone, which influenced their morphological features. The tumuli are situated on the slopes of hills, with four of them positioned on hilltops overlooking both sides of the island. These more prominent tumuli may have been placed randomly. Notably, the cist graves within them share a similar east-west orientation, while the graves of the other tumuli situated on the slopes align closely with a north-south axis. Due to the extensive looting of almost all graves, it is challenging to discern specific burial customs and practices.

The scattered distribution of the tumuli across a vast area suggests the existence of an extensive necropolis. These tombs were intentionally located in difficult-to-access places, even today, indicating a purposeful selection

of sites considering the effort required for their construction. Their positions were likely visible to seafarers traversing the Ionian Sea, potentially serving as navigational markers. Similar geographic characteristics are observed in the central Dalmatian Island group, where 672 cairns, including 166 tumuli with cist graves, have been discovered on four islands and the opposite mainland coast (for detailed references, see Vikatou 2018, 411–13).

The skeletal remains discovered within the graves exhibited extensive crushing, thereby presenting a formidable obstacle to conducting a comprehensive osteological examination, limiting our ability to discern crucial details about the individuals, such as their age, sex, health status and potential pathologies. Consequently, the lack of osteological analysis significantly hinders the unraveling of the historical and anthropological dimensions inherent to these burial grounds, which could otherwise shed light on the cultural practices, social structures, and perhaps even the broader historical context of the ancient communities who inhabited Meganisi. Moreover, it is worth noting that certain human teeth found among the skeletal remains appear to be in a deteriorated state. The poor condition of the dental material adds an additional layer of complexity to a DNA analysis process, requiring specialized techniques and expertise to overcome the challenges posed by the degraded samples. Nonetheless, if successful in the future, such DNA testing could significantly enhance our understanding of the individuals' genetic heritage and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of their lives and society.

The limited archaeological data, along with the fragmented state of preservation of the ceramic material and the presence of common types of bronze artifacts, suggest that the prehistoric tumuli can be dated somewhere between the end of the LH IIIC period and the SM period. The precise boundaries and transitions between these phases are challenging to discern in this region. Nonetheless, these briefly presented data serve as the initial evidence of an important archaeological site from the late Mycenaean period and the so-called “Dark Ages”. This period remains largely undocumented on the neighboring island of Lefkada, which has had direct contact with Meganisi.

The available archaeological evidence strongly indicates that Meganisi, a small island located at the intersection of sea routes in the Ionian Sea, is part of the “Cultural Koine” of Western Greece, along with Ithaca and Kephallonia (Vikatou 2017a, 370). Additionally, the tumuli in Nydri, just across from Meganisi, could be seen as another burial option that persisted in the area (Dörpfeld 1927; Vikatou 2014).

Besides the funerary monuments, at the Myli locality, a coastal plateau on the island's eastern side, south of the extended cemetery of the tumuli at Messogalia, the remains of a settlement have been unearthed (Fig. 3). The settlement likely covered the entire 250 x 70 m plateau. However, only one building has been excavated so far. This apsidal-shaped building, oriented north-south, measures 7.00 x 4.20 m internally. It features a double wall constructed with rough stones, which measures a total width of 0.60 m and still stands at a height of 0.60 m. In the center of the sole room created by the apsidal wall, a circular hearth made of small slabs was situated, measuring 1.78 x 1.93 m. The pottery recovered from the building indicates a dating mainly to the LH IIIC Late period (Vikatou 2018, 411). The building is located in the northern part of the plateau, approximately 70 m away from the southernmost tumulus of the cemetery (tumulus 1, Myli locality). The residential area appears to have been separated from the burial area by an east-west wall, which has only been partially identified.

The Mycenaean presence is also identified in other rugged locations at the sites of Kastri, Tourlos and Samaria. The location of Kastri is a low, rocky peak at the northern end of Mount Zygos, approximately 50 m away from the latter tomb that was explored to the south. On this site, a rectangular plateau with a width of 8.50 m is formed. On one side, it is defined by a wall made of dry-stone masonry, reaching a height of up to 1.80 m and a length of 28–30 m (Fig. 4). The surface pottery collected provides evidence of an unknown use of the space during the period of the nearby tomb construction. However, in a hypothetical scenario wherein the region was subjected to external aggression, the rock hill's attributes as a natural stronghold would likely transform it into a refuge of paramount importance. The combination of elevated topography, the defensible rock structure, and an inherent capacity for surveillance could render this enclave a sought-after sanctuary for those seeking protection from adversarial forces. Likewise, Tourlos and Samaria, further to the south, are narrow – hard to access – plateaus, with sporadic finds of prehistoric flint tools and pottery sherds.



Fig. 3: Aerial photograph of the LH IIIC Late settlement at Myli, Meganisi (photo from the Archive of the Ephorate of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada).



Fig. 4: The dry-stone wall at Kastri, Meganisi (photo from the Archive of the Ephorate of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada).

Utilizing the existing archaeological evidence, one could formulate the perspective that the Taphians, operating as both a piratical and mercantile community along the Ionian and Akarnanian coasts, extensively sailed across the entire archipelagic region. They erected enduring stations and bases at strategically significant locations, with one such outpost situated in the Meganisi region.

PIRACY IN THE CENTRAL IONIAN SEA FROM CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MODERN ERA

The activity of pirates continued unabated, even after prehistoric times, in the broader area of the Ionian and Adriatic Seas, where Greeks, Etruscans, Liburnians and other pirates ravaged the islands and coastal regions (especially for the Liburnian pirates see Budić, this volume). Thucydides (1.5.3) mentions the Ozolian Locrians, the Aitolians and the Akarnanians as peoples engaged in maritime piracy. He provides insights into the various factions and activities during the war. One aspect he highlights is the prevalence of piracy in the region.

Establishing colonies along the coasts of the Ionian Sea, which provided safe harbors, was an essential step in combating the phenomenon of piracy that flourished from the shores of Zakynthos to Illyria. In the colony of Lefkada, the Corinthians built the canal, which, especially during times of war, offered an alternative route for a peaceful journey away from the dangerous promontory of Lefkatas in the southern part of the island (Rontogiannis 1988, 92–3; Zachos and Douzougli 2003; Bonelou 2020, esp. 82–6).

In the present coastal zone of the settlement of Lygia, the large harbor of the island was constructed, protected by a substantial breakwater. The underwater remains of the ancient pier are visible in aerial photographs. The existence of a naval port and shipyards in the same area is also possible (Andreou 1998, 177–78). Recently, during an extensive rescue excavation, the large commercial stoa of the harbor, as well as a *katagogion* (hostelry), were investigated (Staikou forthcoming). Given the role of Lefkada as a major regional trading hub in the Ionian Sea, the excavations in this area bring to light “exotic” products that arrived on the island from all over the Mediterranean, due to the existence of extensive commercial networks (Filis and Staikou 2022, 270–74; Staikou 2023).

On the northeastern side of the island, close to the harbor, the sanctuary of Aphrodite Limenida (or Limenarchis) is noted (Melfi 2016, 90–3), the precise location of which archaeologists have not yet been able to ascertain. Facing the goddess of the sea, the mariners would pray for safe journeys without storms and, evidently, without any encounters with pirates!

The Messenian sculptor Damophon was called to Lefkada to repair the statue of Aphrodite Limenida (Melfi 2016, 90–8). An honorary decree inscribed on a monumental Doric column found in the Asklepieion of ancient Messene states that the people of Lefkada provided a rowing ship and many men for the protection of the Messenian sculptor during his return from Lefkada to the port of Kyparissia (*IG IX.1*² iv 1475). We can assume that the waters of the southern Ionian were not particularly safe during the 2nd century BCE, but as gradually over the next centuries the Romans imposed their forces in the Eastern Mediterranean basin (Etruria, Sicily, Illyria, Ionian Sea), and thus the pirates might have begun to lose their bases (Semple 1916, 143–44).

Later on, from the early 16th to the late 17th century, the castle of Ayia Mavra, on the northeast edge of Lefkada (Fig. 5), became one of the most famous pirate dens in the Adriatic Sea, as noted in the travel book of Evliya Çelebi (Sarigiannis 2011, 50–1; Vikatou and Staikou 2023a, 22–3). The crews, consisting of renegade Christians and Muslim sailors of Anatolian or even North African origin, were conscripted by the Ottoman administration of the castle to assist the Ottoman fleet in maintaining control over the wider maritime area under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The pirate ship’s captain, who held the title of *hâssa reis*, was designated as the legitimate leader of the other pirates of Ayia Mavra (Sarigiannis 2011, 57). Their targets were passing Venetian merchant ships and the neighboring Venetian territories of Kephallonia and Zakynthos.



Fig. 5: Aerial photograph of Ayia Mavra castle (photo by K. Xenikakis).

The provocative actions of the pirates led to a counterattack by Maltese knights in May 1625 (Krantonelli 1991, 325). The corsairs arrived outside the fortress of Ayia Mavra with nine ships, blew up the eastern gate with explosives, and climbed the walls using ladders. A prolonged confrontation followed, with casualties on both sides.

Considering the resurgence of piracy, on August 15, 1658, the Venetians attempted to capture the Turkish-held castle with Admiral Biki leading the operation (Vikatu and Staikou 2023a, 23). Pope Alexander VII supported the endeavor by sending three warships, while the Knights of Malta also participated. A general attack commenced after troops were disembarked in the neighborhoods surrounding the castle. However, the allies lost the element of surprise as they arrived in front of the castle walls during daylight due to bad weather. Furthermore, their coordination was inadequate, and they did not act swiftly. Thus, when they tried to climb the walls with the ladders they had brought, they discovered they were too short. Despite their attempts to blow up the fortress gate with explosives, they ultimately failed. After these mishaps, Admiral Biki was forced to order a retreat just a few hours after the operation began. Following the collapse of the Venetian Republic in 1797 and the presence of the French, Russian, and British on the island of Lefkada, Greeks and foreigners intermittently engaged in piracy or attacked ships of opposing naval forces (Çoruh 2018). The western coasts of Lefkada, particularly around Gria Langada, were a hotspot for renowned pirates until the early 19th century. In fact, their descendants have erected a –still standing– monument by the Pefkoulia beach to immortalize their legacy (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: The monument at Pefkoulia (photo by V. Samaras).

WATER LABYRINTHS: A NETWORK OF PORTS, MOORAGES AND HIDEOUTS FROM LEFKADA TO THE ECHINADES ISLAND COMPLEX

Throughout time, pirates in the central Ionian Sea would seek hideouts to avoid detection and launch surprise attacks on passing ships. The small natural harbors and bays along the islands' rocky shores provided concealment points suitable for ambush. At the same time, the intricate network of maritime passages offered alternative escape routes in case of pursuit.

According to Dörpfeld's theory (Dörpfeld 1927, 117–19) that Homeric Ithaca is identified with Lefkada and considering the significant prehistoric settlement he found in the Nydri plain, he identified the sheltered bay of Vlycho, near Nydri, as the primary harbor of Odysseus' kingdom (see also Vikatou 2014, 10–1). The Vlycho harbor is characterized by its depth, substantial horizontal expanse, and effective protection provided by the cape of Ayia Kyriaki. Employing the same rationale, Dörpfeld (1927, 123–24) identified a small harbor at the base of Mount Skaros, where the Dimosari stream meets the sea, as the location of *Rheithron* harbor (*Od.* 1.186). From there, a commanding view towards the Pringiponisia is secured (meaning the cluster of small islands, including Cheloni, Sparti, Skorpidi, Skorprios, Tsokari and Madouri). Finally, the harbor of Phorcys –where the Phaeacians disembarked the sleeping Odysseus (*Od.* 13.116–124)– corresponds, according to the German excavator (Dörpfeld 1927, 109–13), to the present-day Syvota. The topographical details described in the *Odyssey* (13.96–125, 13.345–351) are consistent: a small, enclosed, deep bay with sources of brackish water, large and small caves around, at a remote location on the island.

In the northern part of Meganisi, there is a noticeable fragmentation of the coastline, leading to the creation of five large bays (Spilia, Vathy, Bali, Ambelaki and Atherinou), as well as numerous small ones resembling fjords. Coves and natural moorages form in this area and in other parts of the island, providing ideal settings for pirate activities. Today, only a limited amount of ancient construction material is preserved in Vathy, which can be associated with the remains of the ancient harbor (Palmos 1992).

The marine Papanikolis cave, located in the southwestern part of Meganisi, was undoubtedly used for thousands of years by ancient sailors who sought refuge in this shelter to protect themselves from storms or to hide. Its length is 120 m, the width varies from 60 m near the entrance to 23 m inside the cave, and its depth is approximately 30 m. It is large enough for ships, even those with relatively tall masts. It was named after the submarine *Papanikolis*, as it is said to have used the cave as a base during World War II, although this is more of a myth than a reality.

The islets of Kythros and Atokos, characterized by their rocky coastlines, coupled with their relatively secluded locations, could have served as optimal natural hideouts for pirate vessels. Of particular interest is the islet of Arkoudi, situated south of Lefkada. Dörpfeld (1927, 98–101) associated this islet with the Homeric islet Asteris, where Telemachus sought refuge while being pursued by the suitors. Noteworthy are the islet's two similarly configured harbors, as described in the Homeric narrative (*Od.* 4.844–847, trans. J.E. Huddleston, <https://topostext.org/work/3>):

There is an island in the middle of the rocky sea, precisely between Ithaca and rugged Same, called Asteris, not significant; it has two secure double harbors; there the Achaeans lay in wait.

Closer to the coasts of Akarnania are the islets of Kastos and Kalamos, which feature secluded bays and anchorages that would be attractive to pirates. In the central-western part of Kastos, there is a natural harbor called Sarakiniko, facing north. Today, this name can be found in many coastal areas in Greece, where, as it is said, Saracen pirates passed by and left their mark. In the Ionian Sea, the toponym *Sarakiniko* is also found in Kephallonia, Ithaca and Preveza.

Kalamos is the second-largest island in the Teleboan complex after Meganisi, resembling a lush mountain in the heart of the Inner Ionian Archipelago (Moutzali 2003, 71–6). Dörpfeld (1927, 134–35) believed that Kalamos was the ancient Taphos, as the iron traded by the Taphian king Mentos (*Od.* 1.184) was not found on Meganisi, but was abundant on Kalamos. The Porto Leone Bay, as named by the Venetians, who mapped the area, could have been an ideal refuge for pirate ships throughout antiquity due to its adequate horizontal expanse. Nowadays, at the bay's entrance architectural material of the Venetian period is still visible (Fig. 7).

Further south, the labyrinthine sea passages and small hidden coves among the islands of the Echinades could have served as excellent locations for pirates attempting raids in Akarnania. In Platygiati, on the western coast of Akarnania, facing the Echinades complex, an Early Bronze Age cluster of buildings has been excavated underwater in the past. The tidally washed settlement inside the deep bay probably had a maritime character (Delaporta and Spondylis 1991, 45).

It is essential to delve into the profound significance of caves concerning pirate activity, particularly within the karstic region of the Ionian islands and the shores of Akarnania. These areas boast a plethora of expansive caves (Chirotrypa at Apolpaina, Chirospilia at Evgiros, the Cyclops' cave in Meganisi, Chirospilia at Nea Plaghia, to name a few) that probably could offer refuge to local inhabitants when confronted with the imminent threat of marauding pirates prowling the coastal waters.

The island's northeast side is unlikely to have served as a refuge for pirates during the period when the fortified ancient city thrived. The narrow channel would have functioned as a trap for hostile ships. Additionally, as already mentioned, it is probable that there were military maritime installations alongside the commercial harbor. Regular patrols by the city's naval forces, which also possessed a second smaller harbor near Kamini Beach on the northern side of the island (Vikatou and Staikou 2015, 627), would have been common. However,



Fig. 7: Porto Leone Bay at Kalamos island (photo from the Archive of the Ephorate of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada).

the southern and western shores of Lefkada, with their steep cliffs and hidden coves, could potentially have provided pirates with a temporary hideaway.

EPILOGUE

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Aitolioakarnania and Lefkada is actively sharing archaeological knowledge, creating a new educational brochure designed for secondary education students (Vikatou and Staikou 2023b). This comprehensive brochure delves into the intriguing topic of piracy in the central Ionian region, tracing its roots from the prehistoric period to the era of the pirates associated with the Ayia Mavra fortress. Furthermore, an interactive info-kiosk has been installed within the newly constructed museum, situated in the two-room casemate of the Ayia Mavra castle. The multi-touch screen table, equipped with a rich array of visual materials, provides visitors with detailed information on the historical evolution of piracy on the island of Lefkada.

The unearthing of the prehistoric tombs on Meganisi and the continuous exploration of Lefkada's maritime history, spanning from excavations at the ancient harbor in Lygia to the documentation of the adventurous episodes in the pirate haven of Ayia Mavra, shed light on the intriguing but elusive world of pirates.



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“Savage” Liburnians, Notorious for Piracy

Reconsidering the Liburnian Thalassocracy and the Role of Seaborne Raids

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ABSTRACT

The Liburnians, native people who lived along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, are in ancient written sources frequently associated with piracy. Based on Strabo's (6.2.4) and Appian's (B Civ. 2.6.39) accounts of their presence on Korkyra and Epidamnus, scholars have developed the concept of the Early Iron Age Liburnian thalassocracy (ca. 800–500/400 BCE). Numerous historical interpretations have tried to strengthen or dispute the extent, scale, frequency and chronological scope of Liburnian influence and piracy. Through the analysis of regional geographical, economic and social circumstances, this paper aims to reconsider the concept of thalassocracy and give the explanatory tool for understanding Liburnian inclination to piracy.

THE LIBURNIANS – THE EARLY IRON AGE TERRITORIAL SPAN AND ITS CONNECTION TO THALASSOCRACY AND PIRACY

The Liburnians can be traced back to the Early Iron Age (EIA, ca. 800–500/400 BCE) on a territory that encompasses the Kvarner Bay and northern Dalmatia in modern-day Croatia (Fig. 1; Suić 1981, 94–102; Čače 1985, 82–9; Batović 1987, 339–40; 2005, 5–6). The geographical span from the Raša River in the north and the Krka River in the south is additionally supported by later Roman literary sources, such as Pliny the Elder (*HN* 3.139) and Florus (1.21.1–3). However, based on various written accounts, many scholars tend to follow the hypothesis that during the EIA the Liburnians dominated over a broader space (e.g., Wilkes 1969, 4; Suić 1981, 88–91; Šašel Kos 2005, 183–88; Matijašić 2009, 30–2; Kurilić 2008, 14; Batović 2005, 14–6; for an overview in the English language, see also Barnett 2017, 64 n. 2.). Theopompus, who wrote in the 4th century BCE, stated that Ladesta (modern-day Lastovo) belonged to the Liburnians (*FGrH* 115 F131 = Steph. Byz. s.v. Λάδεστα). In the following century, Apollonius Rhodius (4.562–566) named some of the central Dalmatian islands Liburnian. Scymnos of Chios, a 2nd century BCE author, claimed that Pharos (modern-day Hvar) was a Liburnian island as well (*FGrH* 2047 F2 = Steph. Byz. s.v. Πάρος). Moreover, a 1st century CE Roman geographer, Pomponius Mela (2.57), stressed that the Nar River (modern-day Neretva) was the southern border of the Liburnian territory.

Liburnian influence was not only limited to the land territory. In Roman literary sources, their maritime supremacy was even more emphasized, particularly while referring to past times. Strabo (6.2.4) claimed that Liburnians occupied Korkyra well before the Corinthian colonization in 733 BCE (Korkyra is now called *Kerkyra* or *Corfu*; on the toponym and the city-ethnic in antiquity see Gehrke and Wirbelauer 2004, 361).



Fig. 1. Map with highlighted geographical terms mentioned in the text (map by the author).

Appian (*B Civ.* 2.6.39) added that Liburnians had taken Epidamnos from Taulantii before being expelled by the Korkyreans in 627 BCE. Furthermore, the Liburnian presence on the western Adriatic coast was also directly or indirectly mentioned by Polybius (3.100.2), Florus (1.21.1) and Pliny the Elder (*HN* 3.110, 3.112). All aforementioned accounts led scholars to conclude that Liburnians dominated much of the Adriatic maritime space during the EIA. The concept is frequently repeated in the literature under the term *the Liburnian thalassocracy* (e.g., Suić 1953; 1981, 90; Wilkes 1969, 4; Stipčević 1989, 31–2; Katičić 1995, 108–9; Zaninović 1996, 292–301; Malkin 1998, 77–8; Šašel Kos 2015, 6–13).

Unsurprisingly, the Liburnian thalassocracy concept is closely intertwined with widespread and far-flung piracy. In addition to the narratives that imply Liburnian control of maritime hubs, such as Epidamnos and Korkyra, the more peculiar elaboration is based on two Roman literary sources – Livy and Appian.

Describing the military venture of the Spartan exile Cleonymus, Livy (10.2.4) mentioned that the Spartan fleet was carried up the Adriatic, where on the left (west) side were the harborless shores of Italy and on the right (east) side the Illyrians, the Liburnians and the Histrians, all characterized as savage tribes chiefly notorious for their acts of piracy. The supplement to Livy's account of the eastern Adriatic piracy is some verses from the

Argonautica (4.524–529), written by Apollonius Rhodius in the 3rd century BCE. Although the information derives from a mythological context, the Hylleans, whose territory is ascribed to be south of Liburnia, are mentioned to be previously infamous for devising the hurt at sea. Appian (*B Civ.* 2.6.39; *Ill.* 4.16) contributed to the knowledge of Liburnian piracy, emphasizing their fast-sailing boats (called *liburnicae*), which enabled them to conduct piratical expeditions against their neighbors.

Florus (1.21.1–3), who compiled his history in the first half of the 1st century CE, equated the Liburnians and the Illyrians, while describing the savagery Romans experienced in the Adriatic Sea during the reign of Queen Teuta (late 3rd century BCE). The Liburnian maritime raids were once again directly highlighted in Appian's account (*Ill.* 4.16), who wrote that Octavian deprived the Liburnians of their ships because they practiced piracy. Since the Liburnians are often identified with the Illyrians in historical sources, the accounts should be supplemented with Strabo's general remark on the Illyrian habits:

But although the Illyrian seaboard is such, people in earlier times made but small account of it [the land] – perhaps in part owing to their ignorance of its fertility, though mostly because of the wildness of the inhabitants and their piratical habits (Strabo 7.5.10, trans. by H.L. Jones, Cambridge, Mass., 1924).

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS TO THE LIBURNIAN PIRACY NARRATIVE AND THEIR CRITICISM – IN THE TURMOIL OF THE TRANS-ADRIATIC NETWORK OF EXCHANGE

In the scholarly literature, historical accounts are frequently reinforced with archaeological details in an attempt to support the Liburnian piracy narrative. For the authors who claim that intercepting and engaging with enemy ships had been an integral part of Liburnian routine, rare and valuable objects, such as the helmet from the Cape Jablanac on the island of Cres dated between 550 and 400 BCE, serve as a tempting proof for crimes on the sea (Boršić et al. 2021, 21–2). In the light of Strabo's (6.2.4) and Appian's (*B Civ.* 2.6.39) accounts of the Liburnian maritime dominance during the EIA in the south Adriatic and north Ionian Seas, scholars observe some foreign objects, particularly ones of Greek origin, as a possible outcome of sea raids. No wonder, piracy has been highlighted as the probable way of acquiring Middle and Late Corinthian or Italo-Corinthian vases found on the eastern Adriatic coast (Zaninović 2015, 86, 147). Nevertheless, this hypothesis deserves to be observed more closely, due to many social and economic factors regarding the current state of archaeological research and the knowledge about the EIA exchange networks in the Adriatic Sea.

Firstly, the number of Liburnian sites containing Archaic or Early Classical Greek material is not abundant (Šešelj 2009, 412–39; Čelhar and Borzić 2016, 78; Budić 2022, 62–4). Since many locations have not yet been properly explored or excavated, it would be overambitious to conclude that valuable Greek objects scarcely reached the Liburnian communities, and hence could be defined as potential spoils of occasional piratical raids as Marin Zaninović (2015, 86, 147) suggested. The recent excavations in Zadar (ancient *Iader*) have exposed a different pattern. Judged primarily on the size, location and political role of the site in later history (Čondić and Vuković 2017, 32–3), *Iader* should be designated as the leading Liburnian hillfort and a strategic maritime hub. The excavations in the Zadar old city, i.e., the former core of the Liburnian settlement, revealed a significant number of imports, mostly of Daunian and Greek origin (Čondić and Vuković 2017, 74–99).

Secondly, a discussion about the way foreign goods arrived among the Liburnians should not be observed without insight into the trans-Adriatic prehistoric network, an often-overlooked phenomenon in the literature. The circulation of the indigenous material shows a well-established pattern of exchange between the eastern and the western Adriatic coast. During the EIA, Liburnian exchange with the opposite Italian coast is attested by numerous imports, particularly from the region of Picenum and Daunia (Batović 1976; Majnarić-Pandžić 1998,



Fig. 2. Daunian limestone stele with carved sailing ship, Manfredonia, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 806 (photo by the author).

308; Barbarić 2010, 59–60). The obvious exchange indication is numerous pieces of Daunian pottery, frequently found on Liburnian sites (summary in Budić 2022, 365–68). Not only do their amount and spread reveal the mechanism of the trans-Adriatic trade network, but also consequently challenge the hypothesis of the prevailing EIA Liburnian thalassocracy in the Adriatic Sea. It seems far-fetched to define Liburnians as maritime protagonists and the only ones responsible for dispersing the Daunian ware or similar circum-Adriatic material along all its coasts (cf. De Juliis 1978, 20; D’Ercole 2002, 29). This argument can be further strengthened by depictions of Novilara and Daunian stellae that uncover the maritime and possibly piratical character of the western Adriatic peoples (Fig. 2; Staccioli 1983, 215; Nava 2004, 90–1; Medas 2016, 151, 160).

Bearing in mind the trans-Adriatic exchange networks, the concept of the EIA Liburnian thalassocracy immediately turns to the question of its validity. Even without the insight into archaeological material, historians have warned about the issue of criticality towards Strabo’s (6.2.4) and Appian’s (*B Civ.* 2.6.39) testimonies (e.g., Džino 2014, 52–5; Barnett 2017, 74). In addition to Strabo’s narrative about the Liburnian presence on Korkyra, ancient literature offers two different accounts. In a purely mythological context, Apollonius Rhodius (4.1211–1216) wrote that the Colchians and the Phaeacians lived on the island prior to the Corinthian arrival. On the other hand, Plutarch (*Quaest. Graec.* 11) claimed that Korkyra had been previously inhabited by the Euboean Eretrians. Even though the archaeological research showed the predominance of the local Illyrian material on Korkyra prior to the Greek arrival, the objects are not related to the Liburnian material culture (Malkin 1998, 78 n. 65). Moreover, not only is Appian’s narrative claimed to be anachronistically inserted (Čaće 2002, 86–9), but the EIA scope of Liburnian influence on the western Adriatic coast also remains doubtful (Čaće 2002, 96–7; D’Ercole 2002, 26–30; Džino 2014, 52–5; Barnett 2017, 74).

THE FOUNDATION OF ADRIA AND SPINA AND ELUSIVE TRACES OF THE LIBURNIAN PIRACY

During the second half of the 6th century BCE, Greeks founded two settlements in the northern Adriatic (Giudice et al. 2004, 178; D'Ercole 2007, 160 n. 5). Those were Adria and Spina, whose brisk economic success can be recognized by immense Attic imports during the 5th century BCE (Reusser et al. 2011, 105–6 n. 1), as well as by ancient written testimonies (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.18.4; Strabo 5.1.7, 9.3.8). Judging from the current state of research, especially the lack of systematic archaeological knowledge of indigenous sites and the relatively limited number of Greek artifacts, it is only possible to assume that the establishment of new trade routes correlated with the increase in piratical activities (cf. Gabrielsen 2001, 220–21). However, it seems that the Greeks preferred to sail along the western coast or to follow the central Adriatic axis due to distance and sailing duration from northwestern Greece to the mouth of Po River (Kirigin et al. 2009, 149). Consequently, this would also keep them beyond the reach of the Liburnian, Histrian and Illyrian pirates, who lurked within the island zone of the eastern Adriatic.

Soon after the establishment of Adria and Spina, Hecataeus of Miletus (6th/5th century BCE) compiled his *World Survey* (*Περίοδος γῆς*), which contained the first known geographic and ethnographic description of the eastern Adriatic coast. Although this work has been preserved only in fragments and there were undoubtedly subsequent interventions by Stephanus Byzantius or some earlier authors (Billerbeck 2014, 217 n. 112), the Liburnian ship highlighted there was not linked to any kind of piratical activities (*FGrH* I F93 = Steph. Byz. s.v. Λιβυρνοί). Stephanus Byzantius also draws attention to the Liburnian *mandia* (λιβυρνική μανδύη), a garment associated with the Liburnians. While it cannot be proven that Hecataeus' account already contained this particular detail, especially given the fragmentary state of the tradition and the likelihood of later interventions, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the same motif is attested in a fragment of Aeschylus' lost tragedy (*TGF* F364). The earliest surviving Greek testimony about the Liburnians, then, foregrounds an element of clothing rather than any association with piracy.

However, this argument does not necessarily allude to the fact that the Liburnians were not engaged in piracy. If one considers the synchronous Greek attitude on the social acceptability of piracy as part of the everyday economy (for instance, Hdt. 3.39.3–4, 6.17.1; Thuc. 1.5.1–3), Hecataeus might not have needed to highlight piracy as a distinctive Liburnian feature. An identical concept and pattern could be applied to *The Periplus*, a more detailed geographical and ethnographic work written by Pseudo-Scylax around the mid-4th century BCE. In his pilot, the Liburnians were not brought into any connection to piracy (Ps.-Scyl. 21). The only testimony that is sometimes associated with piracy in literature belongs to logographer Lysias. In two of his speeches (32.25, fr. 1.4.40–41), Lysias pointed out the dangerous navigation in the Adriatic, but it is not possible to discern whether the reason for this was piracy, hazardous maritime and weather conditions, long-distance voyages or the combination of everything proposed.

THE FIRST PERMANENT GREEK SETTLEMENTS – “NEW CHANCES” FOR LIBURNIAN PIRATES

At the beginning of the 4th century BCE, Syracusans and Parians established two permanent settlements on the eastern Adriatic coast (Diod. Sic. 15.13.4, 15.14.1–2) – Issa on the island of Vis and Pharos on the island of Hvar (for a summary of the extensive historiographical discussion on the Syracusan foundation of Issa or Lissus, see Zaninović 2015, 123–33; Budić 2018, 100–2, n. 3; on the Parian foundation of Pharos, see Kirigin 2006, 46–7; Budić 2018, 102–29). The permanent Greek presence in central Dalmatia meant a shift in power and trading balance. As several epigraphic and literary sources indicate, the earliest encounter of newly settled Greeks with Liburnians reflects probable animosities and rivalry. The most prominent is the Pharian trophy



Fig. 3. The Pharian trophy, Zagreb, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. KS-172 (reproduced with permission from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, ©Igor Krajcar).

with the inscription “*The Pharians weapons of the Iadasini and allies [...]*” (CIG II 1837c). Even though there are different interpretations of the latter ethnonym, the most common is that the Iadasini stand for the inhabitants of Liburnian Iader (for a summary of this broader historical discussion, see Zaninović 2015, 146–47). Again, there is no direct relation to the Liburnian piracy.

The same can be surmised from Diodorus’ passage on the Greeks settling in central Dalmatia (15.14.2–3). The threat at sea that the Greeks experienced after colonizing the island of Pharos took the form of an organized indigenous resistance (Suić 2003, 21), not a set of marginal pirate attacks. Diodorus further described that the Greeks managed to suppress the native uprising by sinking and capturing their ships.

New Greek settlements in central Dalmatia imply an increase in maritime traffic and therefore a greater likelihood of maritime attacks. Several decades after the foundation of Issa and Pharos, Diodorus explicitly highlighted indigenous piracy, while describing the establishment of two unnamed colonies around 360 BCE in Apulia by the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius the Younger: “...*the barbarians who dwelt along the coast were accustomed to put out in numerous pirate ships and render the whole shore along the Adriatic Sea unsafe for merchants*” (Diod. Sic. 16.5.3, trans. C.H. Oldfather, Cambridge, Mass., 1933). Some scholars are inclined to connect this account with the piracy of the eastern Adriatic people, who appear in Livy’s narrative (10.2.4) as infamous sea raiders (Čače 2005, 173). Chronologically speaking, Cleonymus’ sailing venture in the Adriatic (302 BCE), described by Titus Livius, took place only around 50 years after the establishment of Dionysius’ Apulian settlements. On the other hand, since numerous western Adriatic peoples, particularly the Peucetians, the Iapygians and the Etruscans, are often associated with piracy at that time (see Dell 1967, 354–56, with references to literary and epigraphic sources), this account may again not be related exclusively to the Liburnian seaborne raids.

GROWING ROMAN IMPACT AND THE LACK OF LIBURNIAN PIRACY IN WRITTEN SOURCES

During the second half of the 3rd century BCE, the Roman interest in the eastern Adriatic coast commenced. The simultaneous increase in maritime trade –confirmed by archaeological evidence (Šešelj 2009, 478–79)– could have been followed by more intensive piratical activity (Gabrielsen 2001, 237; Čače 2013, 21). Livy (10.2.4) placed the infamous piracy performed by the Illyrians, Histrians and Liburnians at the turn of the 3rd century BCE. In other written sources (e.g., Polyb. 2.8.1; App. *Ill.* 1.3; Cass. Dio 12.19), maritime raids were frequently noticed as a dominant indigenous feature and a logical cause for the Roman military reaction.

However, the protagonists were not the Liburnians, but the Ardiei – an Illyrian tribe that dwelt south of the Liburnian territory. Ardiei became notorious for their piracy during the reign of Queen Teuta in the 220s BCE. Maybe it was not coincidental that the 2nd century CE Roman historian Florus equated the Illyrians to the Liburnians, and confused them with the Ardiei. The common denominator could have been the maritime domination: “*The Illyrians, or Liburnians [...] spread widely along the coast of the Adriatic Sea*”, but more notably for their piracy blended with cruel crimes: “*Under the rule of their queen Teutana, not content with depredations, they added crime to lawlessness. When our ambassadors came to protest against their delinquencies, they slew them, not with the sword, but like sacrificial victims, with the axe, and burnt to death the commanders of our ships*” (Florus 1.21.1–4, trans. E.S. Forster, Cambridge, Mass., 1929).

During the 2nd and the first half of the 1st century BCE, Liburnian piracy was almost completely omitted from the written sources (for an overview, see Čače 2005, 173–74). The only direct mention is linked to Octavian's venture against the Liburnian pirates in 35 BCE (App. *Ill.* 4.16). Many scholars support the hypothesis of their collaboration with the Roman side (Čače 1991, 59–62; 2005, 178; Zaninović 2015, 347; Milivojević 2017, 107–8), while the Illyrians and Delmatae assumed the status of the most ferocious rivals. In addition, the analysis of the archaeological material found along the eastern Adriatic sites suggests ongoing trade between Greeks and Liburnians that flourished during the 3rd and the 2nd century BCE (Šešelj 2009, 513–27). Although the written sources on the history of the eastern Adriatic Sea are scarce, the Liburnian pirate reputation is sporadically used in scholarly literature as an explanatory tool for complementing the regional historical context. For instance, Morgan (1973, 39–43) used that pattern to supplement the context of Gaius Sempronius Tuditanus' campaign during 129 BCE in Illyricum.

THE LIBURNIAN PIRACY – GEOGRAPHICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Having in mind a chronological overview and various interpretations, it looks apparent that a more detailed understanding of the Liburnian piracy extent, scale and chronological scope is gravely limited by various obstacles.

Firstly, to interpret pirate raids exclusively on archaeological material appears to be misleading. Even a small amount of exotic trade goods could always have diverse provenance backgrounds: direct or intermediary exchange and trade, tribute, piracy and similar. It is also implausible to link the number of shipwreck finds belonging to merchant cargo ships with local piracy patterns, since keeping captured vessels was crucial for the transport of stolen goods. The presence of valuable commodities on shipwreck sites, especially an ample load of amphorae carrying desirable liquids that ought to have been plundered, could be additional support to the hypothesis (cf. Royal 2012, 440–41; Boršić et al. 2021, 23). However, a different scenario should not be excluded, since there must have been instances of pirates sinking the captured ships and leaving the bulky cargo such as amphorae aside, while stealing only luxurious objects and enslaving the crew (cf. Gabrielsen 2003, 394; Lewis 2019, 103). Based on the overall archaeological research conducted on the eastern Adriatic coast so far, there has

not been a good reason to identify a single Liburnian site as a proper pirate lair. However, the lack of systematic research on such locations is a significant barrier.

Secondly, simply relying on written sources seems also deceptive, because they tend to highlight crucial historical episodes and omit marginal pirate attacks not related to major political events. The case of the preserved records about the eastern Adriatic Sea completely fits into the picture. On top of that, authors who worked under the firm and well-established Roman influence, such as Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE), Strabo (1st century BCE), Livy (1st century BCE/1st century CE), Appian (1st/2nd century CE) and Florus (2nd century CE), deliberately emphasized Liburnian piracy as an obstructive feature and frequently mentioned it in the context of former Greek or Roman territorial and maritime pretensions. Some of them undoubtedly reflect Roman anti-piracy measures. On the other hand, the absence of Liburnian sea raiders among earlier Greek writers can be understood as a reflection of the general acceptance of piracy as an omnipresent economic activity. Above all, one should never forget the survivorship bias when analyzing written sources. Therefore, their limited number, either due to the state of their preservation or due to marginality of the eastern Adriatic in ancient sources, should not serve as appropriate support for interpreting the extent and frequency of Liburnian pirate attacks.

Several different thoughts have been put forward in the literature. Henry A. Ormerod (1924, 14) and Maurice Holleaux (1952, 79–80) supported piracy as a general *endemic habit* or a local economic pattern of the eastern Adriatic Sea. Although the hypothesis of endemic piracy is frequently repeated in scholarship (e.g., Bandelli 2004, 64; Fuscagni and Marcaccini 2004, 139; Prusac Lindhagen 2009, 77; Medas 2016, 144–45), it has recently been criticized as well (Džino and Domić Kunić 2013, 81; Boršić et al. 2021, 23).

A different theory tends to support periodic piratical activities depending on the level of trade cooperation and political circumstances in the eastern Adriatic region. For instance, based solely on a study of the written evidence, Harry J. Dell (1967, 354–55) concluded that the evidence for any early Illyrian piracy was tenuous. Although concentrated on the general picture, Dell (1967, 356) stated that the Illyrians, including the Liburnians, did not engage in serious high-seas piracy before 231 BCE. On the other hand, Slobodan Čače (2005, 176–77) claimed that during the Hellenistic period (3rd–1st centuries BCE) the Liburnians were collaborating with foreign merchants, so they must have worked on piracy prevention. According to his opinion (Čače 2005, 180), the concept of Liburnian piracy is more a reflection of contemporary Greek and Roman prejudices, based on occasional conflicts in the maritime space after the establishment of Greek colonies in central Dalmatia. Similarly, Neritan Ceka (2004, 73) claimed that the Roman imagination of Illyrian piracy was rather a category created by ancient and modern historians than a perpetual and specialized activity. Danijel Džino (Džino and Domić Kunić 2013, 81–2; Boršić et al. 2021, 23–4) stated that the local eastern Adriatic piracy should be seen as an outcome of intensive social transformation and change in the Late Iron Age (ca. 400–100 BCE). An active trade with the rest of the Mediterranean pushed the new elites to establish themselves within their communities, mostly through trade, mercenary service and organized sea raids.

Concerning the hypotheses presented so far, we strongly believe that Liburnian piracy should not be separated from a deeper insight into regional geographical, economic and social background. This approach appears to be one of the most effective ways of understanding Liburnian inclination to piracy and one of the possible models that can be applied to the potential reconstruction of historical circumstances that have not left a trace in ancient written and material sources.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Liburnian ecosphere core, defined as a narrow maritime space between the Raša River in the north and the Krka River in the south, including multitudinous islands of northern Dalmatia and Kvarner, belongs to the most indented part of the eastern Adriatic Sea. This feature, also known as “Dalmatian Coasts”, is the result of



Fig. 4. Aerial view of the Kornati islands (© kamenjar.com).

mountain relief submergence after the Last Glacial period and indicates the direction of islands that follow the massif on the mainland (Riđanović 2002, 191–92). Niches of numerous small islands or indented mainland provide safe shelters for sailors in case of hazardous weather conditions (Fig. 4). However, they simultaneously make a perfect setting for sudden sea raids. In addition, a well-indented coast requires a good local knowledge of underwater topography (Morton 2001, 116). This could have been a great advantage for regional sea raiders, as they could easily lure the victim into a trap. Although never directly linked to piracy in written accounts, the Greek pilot books emphasize the vast number of islands along the eastern Adriatic coast. The *Periplus* of Pseudo-Scylax (21–23) mostly lists various islands, pointing out their geographic position. However, the most prominent example is Pseudo-Scymnus' *Periegesis* (372–374), where the Liburnian islands, as well as the Kvarner islands Apsyrtides and Electrides, are equated to the Cycladic archipelago – a convenient setting for piratical raids as well (e.g., Ducrey 1983; Mendoni 2009).

The lack of comments regarding piracy in these works can simply be explained by their genre. However, when Livy described Cleonymus' venture, he strictly differentiated the western from the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea – the first being harborless, the other notorious for piratical activities (10.2.4). Based on what can be discerned from the geography, the crucial difference between them is a straight coastline on the west, in contrast to a well-indented coast and dense archipelago on the east. Apart from the ancient pilot books, numerous eastern Adriatic islands were also emphasized by Apollonius Rhodius (4.524–575). His Argonautic expedition in the Adriatic Sea resembles a prospecting report, stressing the most important navigational landmarks. Among them were the islands that “lay thick and made the path dangerous for those who sailed thereby”. With those words, he described the realm of the Hylleans, who used to devise their hurt on the sea (Ap. Rhod. *Argon* 4.524–527, trans. R.C. Seaton, Cambridge, Mass., 1912). Geographical factors should indeed serve as a fundamental background for a regional piracy discussion.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Karst relief, which dominates northern Dalmatia and the Kvarner region, provides scarce terrain. The most distinctive features are the fragmentation of fertile land, the dominance of smaller land patches, especially on islands, the lack of longer and continuous surface streams and rivers, as well as a confined number of springs on islands. In general, the eastern Adriatic Sea offers limited carrying capacities with a high probability of insufficient life resources (more detailed insight with bibliography in Budić 2022, 292–350). Another important economic factor is general shortage of metal supplies. Since karst relief lacks ore resources, for the regional market supply it was necessary to import raw material from distant areas (Budić 2022, 243–70). Consequently, the competition for metal might have been more pronounced in such circumstances, while piracy seems like one of the easiest ways to obtain it.

All these arguments serve as a firm background for potential short or long-term shortages in the whole region. The phenomenon could contribute to the idea of frequent pirate raids to strengthen the local economy (cf. Dell 1967, 357), especially in a shelter of a well-indented coast, where raids could have been sudden, swift and unexpected. This claim can be strengthened by Aristotle's remark that pirates were just farmers who would seasonally embark on raids to enlarge their income and avoid starvation during lean years (*Pol.* 1256b). For instance, Strabo (11.2.12) directly attributed such a way of life to the Heniochoi, the Zygoi and the Achaei, peoples who dwelt on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. They are described as part-time farmers, compelled to till a poor soil, and part-time pirates. It should be kept in mind that not only foreign merchants should be seen as victims of piracy; robberies at sea could have also taken place between various Liburnian communities. The antagonism between them is known from Roman times (App. *B Civ.* 2.6.39; see also Roman epigraphic evidence in Suić 1981, 107). There are also socio-political reasons why the idea should be taken into consideration for an earlier period.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND

According to Irad Malkin (2002, 154), a *maritime civilization* implies a society that makes a living from the sea and utilizes it as a gateway to distant shores. Geographical and economic conditions undoubtedly influenced the development of Liburnian society. The coastal and island Liburnian communities were beyond the shadow of a doubt maritime people, with sea playing a cardinal part of their economy, politics and everyday life. Therefore, one can expect a maritime space monopolization, which could have been frequently carried out through piracy. It is no wonder that a frequent Liburnian feature in historical accounts is the utility of their fast naval ships, called *liburnae* or *liburnicae* (e.g., App. *Ill.* 4.16; *B Civ.* 2.6.39). The latter account directly linked them to pirate expeditions against their neighbors.

The maritime monopolization was probably carried out on the local level, since the society of Liburnia (a territory between Raša and Krka Rivers) seems politically well-fragmented. Although for earlier periods this can only be speculated, it should be noted that early Greek geographers mentioned numerous ethnonyms along the area later ascribed to the Liburnian territory (cf. Plin. *HN* 3.139). Hecataeus of Miletus (*FGrH* I F94–96) named Mentores, Syopioi and Hythmitai, while Pseudo-Scylax (21) listed many terms (such as Idassa, Attienites, Dyurta, Haloupsoi, Olsoi, Pedetai and Hemionoi) that are difficult to determine precisely due to the corruption of the text. Nevertheless, scholars mostly agree they should be understood as various Liburnian peoples, tribes or settlements (the most accepted interpretation was brought by Suić 1955, 161; for a slightly different account, see also Counillon 2006, 21–2, n. 14, 18). Pseudo-Scymnos (372–374) noted Ismenoi, Mentores and Pelagionians, and even Pliny the Elder (*HN* 3.139) reminiscently stated that the Mentores, Himani, Encheleae, Buni (probably Bulini) and Peucetii (Peucetians) used to belong to the Liburnian race. Additionally, he emphasized the internal Liburnian social division into fourteen separate communities. In the mythological context, Virgil

(*Aen.* 1.244) also mentioned *regna Liburnorum* (the Liburnian kingdoms) – a syntagm that stands with a reason in the plural form. Although the concept of political unity among the Liburnians can sometimes be found in the older scholarship (Suić 1981, 107–9; Čaće 1985, 88, 677–91), it seems more reasonable to define it as a weak socio-political alliance.

Besides social fragmentation caused by local geography, predominantly based on karst terrain obstacles and a labyrinth of numerous islands, there are no implications in the written records that Liburnians ever formed a centralized state. The absence of regional or supra-regional central authority could consequently create anarchy at sea, where there was no one to guarantee safety while trading or sailing. This could have been performed through a set of local monopolies over maritime space that would include piracy as a means of surveillance, control and display of dominance. Although not directly related to the Liburnians, a similar pattern appears in the narrative of the 3rd century BCE, which testifies to the weakness of the regional central authority and its repercussions realized through Illyrian piracy. Having received the Roman delegation, the Illyrian Queen Teuta replied to the Roman envoys that it was not customary for the Illyrian kings to hinder their subjects from piracy (Polyb. 2.8.8).

Additionally, ancient writers pointed out gynecocracy and privileged female role as a prominent feature of Liburnian society (Ps.-Scyl. 21; Nic. Dam., *FGrH* 90 F 103d; Varro, *Rust.* 2.10.8). This could be another reason why Florus (1.21.1) equated the Liburnians and the Illyrians, since the latter were ruled by Queen Teuta at the time. It is justifiable to debate whether to observe the Liburnian gynecocracy as fact, fiction or modus of Greek and Roman mockery towards the “others”. Be that as it may, it seems that the prominent female role in the Liburnian society should be seriously considered (e.g., Alföldy 1961, 318; Suić 1963, 54–5). Various maritime activities would contribute to the long-lasting absence of men at home (cf. Alföldy 1961, 318–19; Kurilić 2008, 50). That would certainly include piracy as a lucrative activity. Moreover, such social trends would be an additional aggravating factor for social unification and centralization processes in the Liburnian society. Aristotle’s comment (*Pol.* 1256b) on peasants who seasonally resorted to piracy helps to better understand such social dynamics.

Finally, ancient sources frequently stress that pirates sought to capture slaves (e.g., Hom. *Od.* 9.39–42, 14.262–265; Hdt. 3.39.3–4; for various inscriptions from Hellenistic period, see Mendoni 2009; Gabrielsen 2013, 147–48; Lewis 2019, 96–9; Pacheco 2020, 100–1). Pseudo-Sylax (23) briefly noted slavery within the Liburnian society. Unfortunately, due to a lack of more details, a more comprehensive insight into Liburnian slavery remains elusive. However, judging from historical context, it is reasonable to assume that one of the main sources of slaves in Liburnian society must have been piracy.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although the Liburnians were not the only people in the Adriatic Sea labeled as vicious pirates, it should be noted that by observing their coastal living space and environment, piracy seems as one of logical economic pursuits. So far, scholars have emphasized the Greek and Roman demonization of Liburnians or the inventing of piracy narratives, but it seems justified to presuppose a strong economic and social base for frequent sea raids. The geographically fragmented territory with numerous islands acts as an appropriate scene for piratical ventures. Regional economic conditions provided by the karst landscape, as well as social indicators based on written sources, suggest that piracy was innate to the people who lived in such environment. It is no wonder that seaborne raids are frequently attributed to the Histrians and the Illyrians, whose living space shared general geographic and economic similarities.

Neither historical sources nor archaeological finds can give a sufficiently clear understanding of Liburnian piracy in terms of its frequency and chronological distinctiveness. Nevertheless, in the eastern Adriatic context, all aforementioned circumstances suggest that piracy should be seen as a sort of endemic habit that implies

piratical opportunities at micro-locational levels. Not only does this include attacks on foreign merchant ships, but also potential seaborne raids among Liburnians and other eastern Adriatic communities (cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.6.39) due to their spatial, social and political disunity. The competition for basic life resources in the austere eastern Adriatic environment is an additional argument for the proposed hypothesis.

On the other hand, interpreting the EIA Liburnian thalassocracy through the lenses of far-flung piracy along the whole Adriatic should be observed with great caution. Primarily, a tradition on which the contemporary Liburnian thalassocracy narrative was constructed seems to be a subsequent intervention done by the Roman authors. This is furthermore supported by the exchange of goods between the eastern and western coasts of the Adriatic Sea during the EIA, showing that the power relations at sea were polycentric. The Liburnians could not have been the sole distributors of various circum-Adriatic goods, especially of Daunian pottery. To maintain a good exchange balance, it would be difficult to imagine active Liburnian piracy along the whole Adriatic area. Likewise, the extension of political power to Epidamnus and Korkyra does not get any support in the historical or archaeological context. It seems more plausible that pirate activities were limited to the Liburnian ecosphere, i.e., coastal belt marked by a highly indented coast, followed by a confined economic background and politically fragmented society.

Thus, we stand by Ormerod's opinion (1924, 14–5) that specific geographic niches should be viewed as a fertile area for piracy development. Some Mediterranean regions, such as Cilicia, Liguria and ultimately the archipelago of the eastern Adriatic Sea, with Liburnia as its most indented part, had distinct predispositions and it is not surprising they appear in historical sources as infamous for seaborne attacks (cf. Strab. 7.5.10). Moreover, regardless of continuities and discontinuities in material and written evidence, piracy had always been an integral part of such an environment. Regarding the hypothesis about eastern Adriatic piracy as a reflection of social transformation in the 4th century BCE, we support a different perspective. An insight into prehistoric material reveals a vivid exchange network in the Adriatic Sea during the EIA. Hence, valuable imports must have affected social differentiation even earlier, thus creating elites who tried to establish themselves within their communities through trade and piracy.

Liburnian piracy appears in ancient texts as a social feature. Therefore, its occasional appearance in written sources should not be an indicator of a decrease or increase in the intensity and frequency of maritime attacks. Since Greek historical accounts frequently reflect piracy as a legitimate economic activity, the lack of labeling Liburnians as notorious pirates in Greek sources should not stand as an argument for absence of sea raids. Moreover, there is a clear distinction regarding the Roman sources that exhibit the Mediterranean anti-piracy politics of the time. Due to the necessity to highlight such episodes, Liburnians appear in them as notorious sea raiders.

By observing this framework from a broader historical perspective, Liburnian piracy and regional maritime dominance seem to be valid arguments not only for creating the concept of the Eastern Adriatic as a dangerous space from the Greek point of view (cf. Lys. 32.25, fr. 1.4.40–41), but also as a cause of a longer absence of permanent Greek settlements in the eastern Adriatic Sea, until the beginning of the 4th century BCE.



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The Pirates' Den of Aigilia and the Antikythera Shipwreck

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ABSTRACT

The Antikythera wreck is one of the most famous archaeological assemblages. During its last and fatal itinerary, the ship departed arguably from Delos, in order to transfer its precious cargo to Italy. While it is usually assumed that the wreck was caused by extreme weather conditions, in this paper we explore a different possibility. Once the wreck is viewed in its topographical and historical context, several strange facts emerge. Most notably, the ship was discovered very close to the pirate's settlement of Aigilia and very far from its alleged route, through the Elaphonissos Strait. During the probable time of the wreck, Rome was pursuing Crete's subordination, under Metellus' generalship, and at the same time the empire was striving to clear the Mediterranean from piracy, under Pompey. This means that a ship serving Roman interests would by all means have avoided sailing through an area controlled by Cretan pirates. Thus, we propose that the ship may have been kidnapped by Aigilian pirates and hauled to their base for ransom. Such an action may have provoked Roman vengeance, given that Aigilia was attacked and obliterated, presumably in 67 BCE.

Panos Valavanis was a fellow student and friend of the first author of the present paper and a cherished teacher of the second. His exceptional human qualities earned him the affection and respect of his colleagues and, above all, his students. He cared for them deeply, instilling in them a genuine passion for the history of our country.

INTRODUCTION

Antikythera, known in antiquity as *Aigilia* or *Aigila*, is a small oblong island, measuring approximately 10.6 km (north/northwest-south/southeast) x 3 km (east-west). Located approximately midway between Kythera and Cape Gramvousa on western Crete, it functions as a natural bridge in the journey from mainland Greece to Crete and vice versa (Fig. 1). The fact that the island lies at the gateway of the Aegean Sea from the west further underlines its strategic significance. Consequently, it is no surprise that several political powers, in historical periods spanning from antiquity through the Cold War, have strived to secure their control over this area. Aside from its strategic importance, the island has, for the most part, a rocky terrain or is covered with thin layers of soil. This means that Antikythera has always had very limited productive capacity, especially with respect to agriculture.



Fig. 1. Map of the eastern and central Mediterranean with the location of Antikythera.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF AIGILIA

The ruins of the major settlement of Antikythera lie at Kastro, a rocky and hilly peninsula, projecting from the north side of the island. Since the late 19th century, the remains of the imposing fortifications have evoked the interest of several archaeologists, including V. Stais (1889), E. Waterhouse and R. Hope-Simpson (1961, 160–63, pl. 29), and I. Petrocheilos (1987). However, it was only after 2000 that a number of crucial aspects of the settlement's history were clarified, thanks to excavations conducted by an international team under A. Tsaravopoulos' directorship and the auspices of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus.

The settlement spread along the steep west side of the peninsula, the southeast part of which was reserved for burial use (Fig. 2). It was protected by massive fortification walls surrounding an area of approximately 70 acres. The wall, which is generally well-preserved, was reinforced with rectangular towers placed at regular intervals. The fortifications are well built mainly in an isodomic style from locally quarried ashlar-blocks. At the upper levels of the peninsula, a smaller enclosure delimits the citadel, with an area of approximately 4.5 acres.

Immediately to the west of the peninsula lay the harbor of ancient Aigilia, viz. modern Xeropotamos Bay. Owing to the slightly oblique orientation of its mouth and its oblong shape, which displays several analogies with the closed port of Phalasarna, the harbor was protected from the north wind. The dimensions of the bay were significantly reduced in 365 CE due to a strong earthquake, which raised the land in this area by approximately 2.7–3 m (Tsaravopoulos and Fragou 2020a, 5–8, with extensive bibliography; Fig. 3). An important landmark of the harbor was Delian Apollo's temple, which was located at the inner shore of the bay (Kozatsas et al. 2014, 173–83).



Fig. 2. The peninsula of Aigilia with the course of the surviving fortifications (in red), from the NW; photorealistic rendering in GIS.



Fig. 3. The Xeropotamos Bay. Noted are the area of the ancient harbor and the shrine of Apollo Aigilieus.

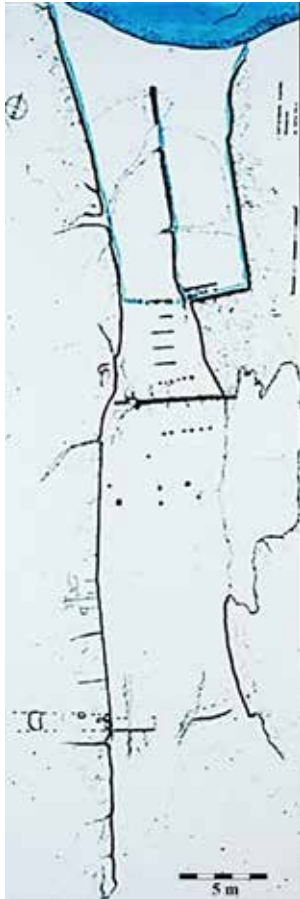


Fig. 4. The shipshed. Plan by E. Tolia-Zori.



Fig. 5. The shipshed, general view from the S. In Hellenistic times the structure was partly submerged.

This shrine is the findspot of a statue base with a dedicatory inscription to Apollo (*IG* V.1 948), dating to the 4th century BCE, as well as of a marble statue of Apollo, dating to the 2nd century BCE (Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. no. 230; Stais 1889, 238, 240–42; Flashar 1992, 85; Kaltsas 2002, 271, no. 567).

Another structure that underlines the strong maritime character of the town is a shipshed. Located at the west shore of the peninsula, beyond the confines of the harbor, the shipshed was carved into the rocky terrain (Figs. 4–6). The shipshed has a total length of approximately 30 m, with a main compartment 18 m long, which was used as the main shelter of the ship. It was also annexed by an autonomous, external compartment, a “resting area” for a ship waiting to launch a piratical attack (Tsaravopoulos 2015, 28–9, fig. 11).

Among the portable finds that were discovered in the settlement are numerous weapons and articles of armor (Tsaravopoulos 2023). These include bronze and iron arrowheads, lead sling bullets of several types, some of which are inscribed, catapult missiles and many wide-headed bronze nails with tiny relief lumps at the inner side of the head, which were suitable for fastening the leather lining of shields (on this type of nails, see Tsaravopoulos 2010–2013). Such finds are highly suggestive of a community in a state of fighting alert.

Numismatic evidence, stamped amphora handles and inscribed sling bullets suggest that Aigilia was part of the territory of Phalasarna on west Crete (Tsaravopoulos 2004–2009, 337–38; 2012, 210–11; on Phalasarna, see Hadjidaki 1988, 2015 with earlier bibliography). All datable finds discovered thus far were dated from the late 4th century BCE to the second quarter of the 1st century BCE; apparently, this period corresponds to the lifespan of the settlement.



Fig. 6. Shipshed: the external annex, “resting area” for a lurking ship, from the S.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The limited productive capacities of Antikythera make it difficult to maintain a well-populated community, let alone create sufficient surplus for the construction of monumental fortifications and other structures. This reality raises a series of crucial questions regarding the historical circumstances under which the impressive fortifications of Aigilia were built.

A porous stone statue base that was discovered in 1888 at the harbor of Xeropotamos offers some valuable clues (Stais 1889, 238, 240–42). An inscription on the base (*IG* V.1 948) gives the information that it was dedicated to Apollo of Aigilia by Aristomenes, son of Aristomedes, from the Thessalian Pherai. As Nick Sekunda has suggested (2004–2009, 597–99; see also Tsaravopoulos 2004–2009, 330–31), the reference to Aristomenes has far-reaching historical ramifications. A certain Aristomenes was a commander of the Persian fleet in the Aegean during the reign of Darius III (Curt. 4.1.36). On the other hand, one of his relations –probably his father– Aristomedes served as a general of the Persian army in the Battle of Issus (Arr. *Anab.* 2.13.2; Curt. 3.9.3). The presence of an official of Aristomenes’ caliber on this small island is a striking fact. After the Battle of Granicus, the Persian authorities bought the alliance of several Cretan cities in an attempt to organize a counter-offensive against the back of Alexander’s III lines (for the evidence for the Persian counter-offensive see Burn 1952, 81–4). Phalasarna was one of those cities. However, not long thereafter, the Persian Empire collapsed and Alexander passed away. These were fortunate circumstances for Phalasarna, since the city was excused from her commitments to her evanescent sponsor and at the same time avoided possible punishment by Alexander.

Phalasarna took full advantage of the Persian resources, first by constructing her massive fortifications on Crete (Sekunda 2004–2009, 597–99; cf. Hadjidaki 2013). Furthermore, Phalasarna expanded her territory through the colonization of Aigilia. The northern side of the island was selected for the foundation of the new settlement through targeted movement. From their Cretan metropolis, the Phalasarnians were able to command an area reaching to the north as far as Antikythera. On the other hand, from their colony at Aigilia, they could now survey a much more extensive area stretching to the north, as far as Kythera, Laconia and the Cyclades. Phalasarna may have also used part of the Persian money to expand her fleet. Thus, during the next two and half centuries, the Phalasarnians exercised a form of state-directed piracy. In that respect, they were not



Fig. 7. A catapult stone ball; discovered next to the west wall of the settlement, it was probably launched from a warship of an enemy force.

alone on Crete (on Cretan piracy see Brulé 1978; Hadjidaki 1988, 122–35). A state treaty of the mid-3rd century BCE offers some valuable insights into the regulations that were agreed upon between Miletus and Knossos, which is joined by many other cities on Crete, Phalasarna included (*IC I viii 6**). Cretans agree to refrain from buying Milesians as slaves and vice versa.

The piratical activities of the inhabitants of Phalasarna and Aigilia caused serious disturbances to the commercial ships of the Rhodians and other minor cities that were protected by them. This obliged the Rhodians to organize several campaigns against the pirates. A decree by the Rhodian demos honors several individuals who had excelled in a campaign against Aigilia (first published by Jacopi 1932, 169–70). This inscription, which is dated to the early 3rd century BCE (Sekunda 2014), is more or less contemporaneous with an extensive destruction layer that has been spotted in several parts of the Kastro settlement. This layer included a few catapult missiles (Fig. 7); they were probably unleashed under the direction of Polemarchos, son of Timocrates, an official specializing in the use of catapults (*καταπαλαφέτας*) according to the aforementioned inscription.

However, Polemarchos was killed in a later campaign. This information derives from a funerary inscription also discovered on Rhodes (first published by Hiller von Gärtringen 1895, 222–27, 395). This inscription commemorates Polemarchos and two of his brothers; all of them were killed during campaigns against “bandits” (*λαῖστές*). It was M. Segre (1932, 452–61) who correlated the two inscriptions and pointed to their historical significance.

Probably, it did not take long for Aigilia to recover from that attack. According to Plutarch’s narration, after his defeat at Sellasia (222 BCE), Sparta’s king Cleomenes III successively sailed to Kythera and Aigilia on his way to Egypt (Plut. *Cleom.* 31.1). This testimony suggests that in that period Sparta, Phalasarna, and the Ptolemaic kingdom were allies. It is also consonant with a slightly earlier inscription commemorating a dedication of Phalasarna to the Great Gods for the Benefactors of the City King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice (*IC II xix 2*). The king mentioned on this inscription was Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222 BCE).

A few years later, Aigilia was involved in the conflicts among Cretan cities. At that time, several powers attempted to control the southern part of the Aegean and the routes to the west, where Rome’s power was constantly increasing. Two foreign kings appear to have intervened in Cretan affairs: Philip V of Macedonia (221–179 BCE) and Nabis of Sparta (207–192 BCE). Philip V was invited to Crete by the citizens of Polyrrhenia (Polyb. 4.55.1–5), an adversary of Phalasarna; Nabis was also involved in the affairs of western Crete (Karafotias 1998). Undoubtedly, both kings tried to bring Antikythera under their control.

Several sling bullets that were discovered within the settlement walls constitute material remains of a raid performed by Nabis. These bullets are of the Laconian type and are inscribed with the word *βασιλέως* (namely, “king’s”), a title that Nabis gave himself during the last years of his reign (Tsaravopoulos 2004–2009, 332–35, fig. 6; 2012, 209–10, 212, fig. 5).

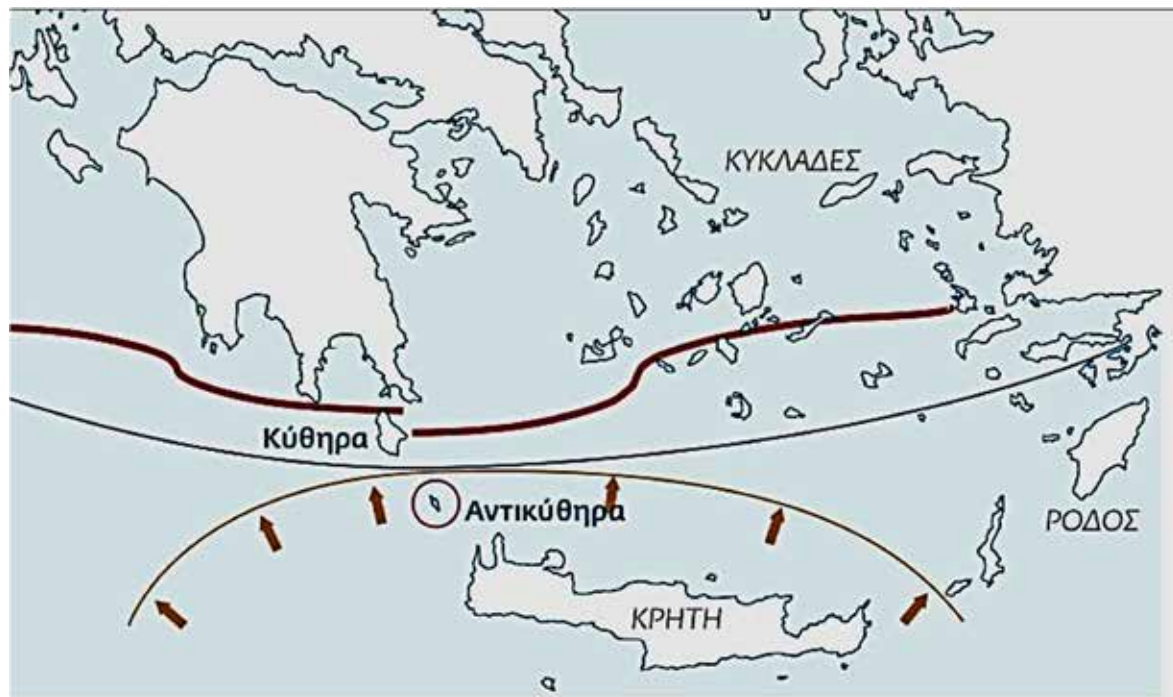


Fig. 8. The intended route of the Antikythera ship (in red line) in relation to the areas that were controlled by the Romans and the Cretans.

THE ANTIKYTHERA WRECK

The 2nd century BCE witnessed the establishment of Rome as a major power in the Mediterranean. In the course of this century, Rome was gradually involved in disputes among Hellenistic monarchs and Greek states. Taking advantage of the constant fights among the Greeks, the Romans managed to expand their influence on the Aegean and finally dominate in the area (Waterfield 2014). At the same time, their increasing acquaintance with Greek culture led to a growing demand for pieces of Greek art and other refined products (Pollitt 1986, 159–62). This caused the gradual enhancement of the maritime trade between Italy and the Aegean. The devouring demand for Greek products has left its imprint on Cicero's writings, who was also an eager collector (*CLA* 1.8.2, 1.9.2, 1.10.3; cf. Bouyia 2012a 278, 280–82; 2012b). This phenomenon further intensified in the early 1st century BCE and allegedly spiked immediately after 71 BCE, as a result of the devastating effects of the Spartacus rebellion; the desire to refurbish wiped private and public buildings in the Italian peninsula may have stimulated the demand for refined Greek products. Undoubtedly, under such circumstances, pirates who could access trade routes connecting Italy and the Aegean were presented with golden opportunities.

Against this background, the discovery of the Antikythera wreck very close to the pirate's nest of Aigilia is a striking fact that deserves closer examination. First, the shipwreck was apparently discovered far beyond established routes of maritime trade throughout antiquity. This conclusion is supported by the fact that no other shipwrecks have been discovered in this area. The presence of pirates on the north side of Antikythera for most of the Hellenistic period was not the only factor that discouraged commercial ships from sailing through this area. Ancient sailors avoided sailing through the open sea, as they regarded coastal routes as much safer against weather's volatile tempers. The safest and preferable route leading from the Aegean to the Ionian Sea passed through the Elaphonissos Strait, between Laconia and the island of Kythera (Fig. 8) (Casson 1991, 142, 179). This would also be the expected route for the Antikythera ship, given its arguable itinerary from Delos to Italy (Bouyia 2012b, 290–1). The distribution of several shipwrecks along the coasts of Laconia and the eastern coast of Kythera allows us to trace this maritime route (Strauss 2024).

Notably, one of these shipwrecks was discovered close to the islet of Mikri Dragonera, off the east coast of Kythera (Kourkoumelis 1992, 2000–2001a, 2000–2001b, 2002). On the islet itself, which was severely battered by earthquakes, there was a shrine, presumably dedicated to Poseidon *Γαήφορος*, viz. “Earth-Shaker” (Tsaravopoulos and Fragou 2017, 2020b). Numerous offerings excavated at this site verify that sailors coming from many different places often stopped at the shrine to venerate the Lord of the sea. Several vases with graffiti from Mikri Dragonera, which were sailors’ personal belongings, are of the same provenance and date as others found at the Antikythera shipwreck (cf. Avronidaki 2012). Weather protection aside, the Elaphonissos Strait was also flanked by Laconia and Kythera, namely, areas that were under Roman control at that time. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the captain of the overloaded Antikythera shipwreck had the intention to sail through the Elaphonissos Strait.

In our discussion, we also have to take into account that the incidence of the shipwreck took place during turbulent times. Cretan cities vexed the Romans, not only due to their involvement in piracy but also because they allied themselves with the King of Pontos Mithridates VI, Rome’s formidable rival. In 74–73 BCE, a Roman campaign against Crete under Marcus Antonius Creticus’ generalship turned into a Roman disaster (de Souza 1999, 141–48). Some years later (69 BCE), Rome unleashed a second attack against Crete, this time under the command of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Creticus. General Pompey was also actively involved in the conflict, acting as a competitor of Metellus. In 67 BCE, the Roman Senate authorized Pompey, under *Lex Gabinia*, to clean the Mediterranean from piracy (Tröster 2009). The Roman campaign ended with the subordination of Crete in 67 BCE (Sanders 1982, 3–4; de Souza 1998; 1999, 157–72). The archaeological evidence from Antikythera verifies that the settlement of Aigilia was destroyed and abandoned at approximately the same time, sharing Phalasarna’s fate (on the evidence from Phalasarna, see Hadjidaki 2001, 157–60).

From this perspective, an attack by the pirates of Aigilia against a ship that served Roman interests would have much deeper than simply utilitarian motives; both sides may well have perceived it as an act of war. Even though a route through the Elaphonissos Strait runs far from Antikythera, at the same time it was within the operational range of the Aigilian pirates. After a sudden attack, the pirates may have captured and subsequently hauled the vessel to their island. However, the massive size of the ship –its capacity was estimated at approximately 300 tons (Throckmorton 1970, 158; Bouyia 2012c; cf. Bouyia 2012b)– may have prevented the Aigilians from leading it into the small harbor of their city. Instead, they anchored the ship next to the little Thymonies Bay, namely just to the east of the city. Not long afterwards, it ended up on the seabed, while the Aigilians were probably negotiating its return to the Romans for ransom.

With respect to the detailed circumstances of its sinking, we believe that there are several possible explanations. Perhaps the pirates themselves sank it on purpose, on the prospect of a Roman attack. On the other hand, an outbreak of a strong north wind would have made the overloaded ship extremely vulnerable. It is also worth mentioning that if the Antikythera shipwreck was a pirate’s victim, it was probably not unique in that respect; the excavators of the Kyrenia shipwreck have also proposed that the sinking of that ship was caused by a pirates’ attack (for discussion and bibliography, see Schmitt and Kieburg 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

While it is usually taken for granted, or inferred, that the wrecking of the Antikythera ship was caused exclusively by adverse weather conditions, we believe that the integration of this find with its historical and topographical context makes an alternative interpretation possible. In this paper, we suggest that the shipwreck was discovered far beyond its expected route and very close to the pirate’s settlement of Aigilia. To the best of our knowledge, no other ancient shipwrecks have been reported in this area. These facts seem even stranger if we take into account that at the alleged time in which the vessel sank, Rome had declared war against Cretan cities, and it was also striving to clear the Aegean from piracy. This entails that a commercial ship full of precious cargo, serving

Roman interests, would by all means have avoided passing through an area that was controlled by Cretan pirates. Furthermore, the fact that the incidence of the shipwreck and the destruction of Aigilia by Metellus are more or less simultaneous events adds one more strange coincidence (the latest securely dated coins from the wreck were minted ca. 76–67 BCE; see Tselekas 2012; cf. Bouyia 2012b, 290). Putting all this evidence together, we regard as at least possible that the sinking of the vessel was related to the activities of the Aigilian pirates, and that this incident was perceived as a military operation in the war between Rome and Crete. Kidnapping and sinking the ship may have given the Romans a further stimulus to attack and mercilessly destroy Aigilia.



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Maritime Commerce, Naval Supremacy and Piracy in the Peloponnese-Crete Strait

A Geo-archaeological Assessment on the Island of Kythera

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ABSTRACT

The island of Kythera is located upon one of the most dangerous passages, of one of the most important maritime routes of the Mediterranean. Subsequently, the island's geostrategic value was exploited for commercial, military and paramilitary purposes by various agents throughout its known history. Generally accepted as prominent prowling grounds, pirate activity in the waters off Kythera is well attested during the early modern times but remains fragmented during antiquity. Additionally, the operational specifics determining pirate activity in the region remain unclear.

*In order to investigate pirate activity in Kythera across time and delineate the *modus operandi* of attacks at sea, this study utilizes a geo-archaeological approach – namely the investigation of the fundamental geomorphological parameters and technological constraints defining navigation in the region, in order to define specific potent zones of operation off the island's coasts, and the subsequent reassessment of associated archaeological remains identified along its coastline.*

The present study is the result of a wider, ongoing, geo-archaeological investigation of the island's maritime history. It utilizes textual and iconographical sources, as well as current geomorphological, historical and archaeological research. This corpus is complemented by historical cartography, cross-examined with present-day data, reports from local mariners recently interviewed and field observations conducted by the author.

INTRODUCTION

The multi-faceted subject of piracy in antiquity has been the focus of significant studies (e.g., Ormerod 1924; Brulé 1978; Gabbert 1986; de Souza 1999; Gabrielsen 2001, 2003, 2013; Lewis 2019), with some scholars focusing on different aspects (see, for example, de Souza 1999 on a political and historiographic and Gabrielsen 2001, 2003, 2013 on a socio-economic perspective). However, one essential aspect has received much less attention – namely, “the pragmatic issue of how it played out in practice” (Lewis 2019, 81), especially at sea.

In order to approach this practical aspect, it is necessary to focus on the fact that piracy is interwoven with seamanship (e.g., Ormerod 1924, 31). Even in its most simple form, of piracy as “violence at sea”, robbing-at-sea requires the competence and skills necessary to operate a boat, under challenging conditions. In essence, pirates and corsairs are armed seamen, and that last feature is a defining parameter that delimits their effectiveness. As such, to approach this aspect of piracy, it is necessary to address basic parameters of seamanship, such as the practical limitations imposed by logistics-at-sea, the technological constraints imposed by contemporary naval

technology, as well as the contemporary developments in naval warfare, and most importantly, the navigation specifics imposed by geomorphology at a local scale.

This investigation focuses on this particular aspect, using the island of Kythera as a case study. Even though the island rarely appears in sources, its rich history is well-attested in several important archaeological sites (for an overview on archaeological remains identified in Kythera, see Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015). What makes the island a particularly interesting case for this study is its location along one of the most important, lucrative and dangerous marine passages in the Mediterranean.

In order to investigate pirate activity off the waters of Kythera and its archaeological imprint along the island's coast, this study utilizes a geo-archaeological approach. This approach aims to define the fundamental geomorphological parameters determining navigation in the region and, as a result, the island's geostrategic significance within wider Mediterranean marine networks. Then, an attempt is made to correlate this geostrategic significance with both attested and inferred pirate and corsair activity throughout its documented history, in order to evaluate specific potent zones of operation off the island's coasts and, subsequently, to propose a reassessment of coastal archaeological remains that can be associated with pirate activity.

The present study is the result of a wider, ongoing, geo-archaeological investigation of the island's maritime history. It utilizes (a) textual, iconographic and cartographic sources dating from antiquity until modern times, (b) published geomorphological, historical and archaeological research, (c) present-day data such as satellite imagery, digital elevation models, meteorological reports, sailing guides and nautical charts, (d) reports from local seamen interviewed between 2022 and 2023, and (e) field observations conducted by the author. The above have been integrated into a geo-referenced database realized on an open-source Geographic Information System software (QGIS). It is a fundamental tool of this study, facilitating the investigation of spatial organization and relations, extrapolation of information from cartographic sources, cross-referencing with present-day data, as well as implementing this study's results into future research.

GEOMORPHOLOGY AND NAVIGATION

The Peloponnese-Crete strait

In general, navigation at the Aegean is defined by predominant north/northeastern winds blowing throughout the year, as well as northbound surface currents (Fig. 1). Combined with currents running from south Peloponnese towards the Ionian and Adriatic Seas, winds and currents greatly favor the circumnavigation of the Greek peninsula from east to west, through the Peloponnese-Crete strait. Similarly, winds and currents facilitate navigation from the Adriatic towards Crete (Agouridis 1997, 2–6).

Located off the southeastern end of the Peloponnese, the island of Kythera is within visual range of both the Laconian and the Cretan coasts. As such, Kythera lies at a crossroads of primary marine routes connecting Crete with the Greek mainland, the Aegean with the Ionian Sea, and the east Mediterranean with the central Mediterranean and the north African coast, major marine routes in use from antiquity until today.

Cape Maleas

An important parameter in assessing the value of Kythera for navigation is its proximity to Cape Maleas. At the turning point of the tip of southern Peloponnese, Cape Maleas is the meeting point of three seas and the collision point of winds blowing from different directions. It is a rough breaking point, affected by a complex combination of distant weather systems and local conditions that result in a highly dangerous, narrow passage, upon one of the most important routes of the Mediterranean (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.).

It is telling that one of the earliest mentions of Kythera in literature is directly connected with (unsuccessfully) navigating past Cape Maleas: “but the wave and the current and the north wind beat me back as I was rounding

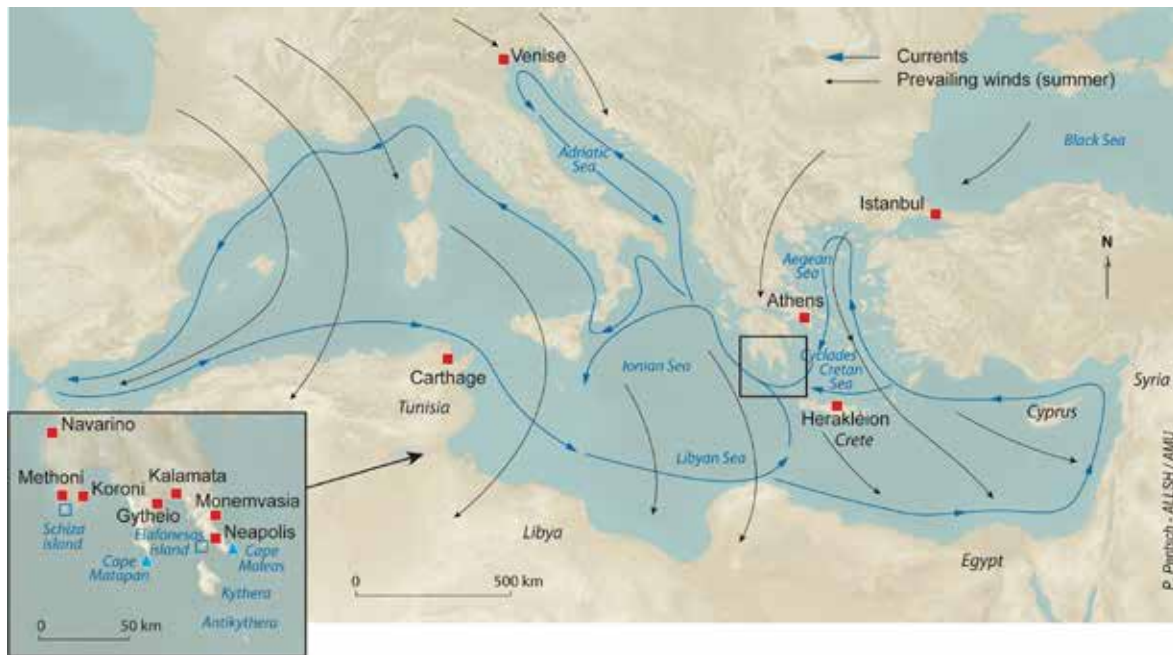


Fig. 1. Predominant currents and prevailing winds during summer in the Mediterranean. Enlarged, the Peloponnese-Kythera strait (map by P. Pentsch, based on Pryor 1992, 14; Agouridis 1997, 4).

Malea, and drove me from my course past Kythera” (Hom. *Od.* 9.80–81, trans. A.T. Murray, Cambridge, Mass., 1919). That is because, according to local mariners, the two closest points to find safety from the cape’s dangerous waters are the cove of Vatika (by present day Neapolis, see Figs. 1–2) and the island of Kythera (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.).

Kythera

Navigating the waters off Kythera can be, nevertheless, dangerous. Due to its location, the island is buffeted by strong winds from several directions. North/northeastern winds are predominant throughout the year, but strong western winds are very common. Also, the island’s west and south coasts are strongly affected by swells. Combined with a mostly steep, rocky and rugged coastline, they make for limited accessibility and dangerous navigation (Aggelidis et al. 2016, 7–9, 38–42).

The island has four potent natural harbors/anchorages: Ocheles, Ayia Pelagia, Kapsali and Ayios Nikolaos (Fig. 2; for more on the harbors of northern Kythera, see Markakis forthcoming). However, no one provides shelter throughout the year. As such, vessels are often forced to adapt to shifting weather and use harbors interchangeably, depending on conditions (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). It should also be mentioned that, despite its semi-arid Mediterranean climate, the island is uncommonly rich in freshwater resources. Freshwater storages can be found along its coastline, in wetland areas and coastal springs (Danamos 1992, 312; Aggelidis et al. 2016, 15–30).

GEOSTRATEGIC VALUE

Maritime commerce

Despite appearing rarely in textual sources, archaeological remains suggest that Kythera played a significant role in enabling commercial traffic throughout its known history. Identified projectiles made of obsidian suggest contact with the Cyclades since at least the Final Neolithic period (Broodbank and Kiriatzi 2007, 260;

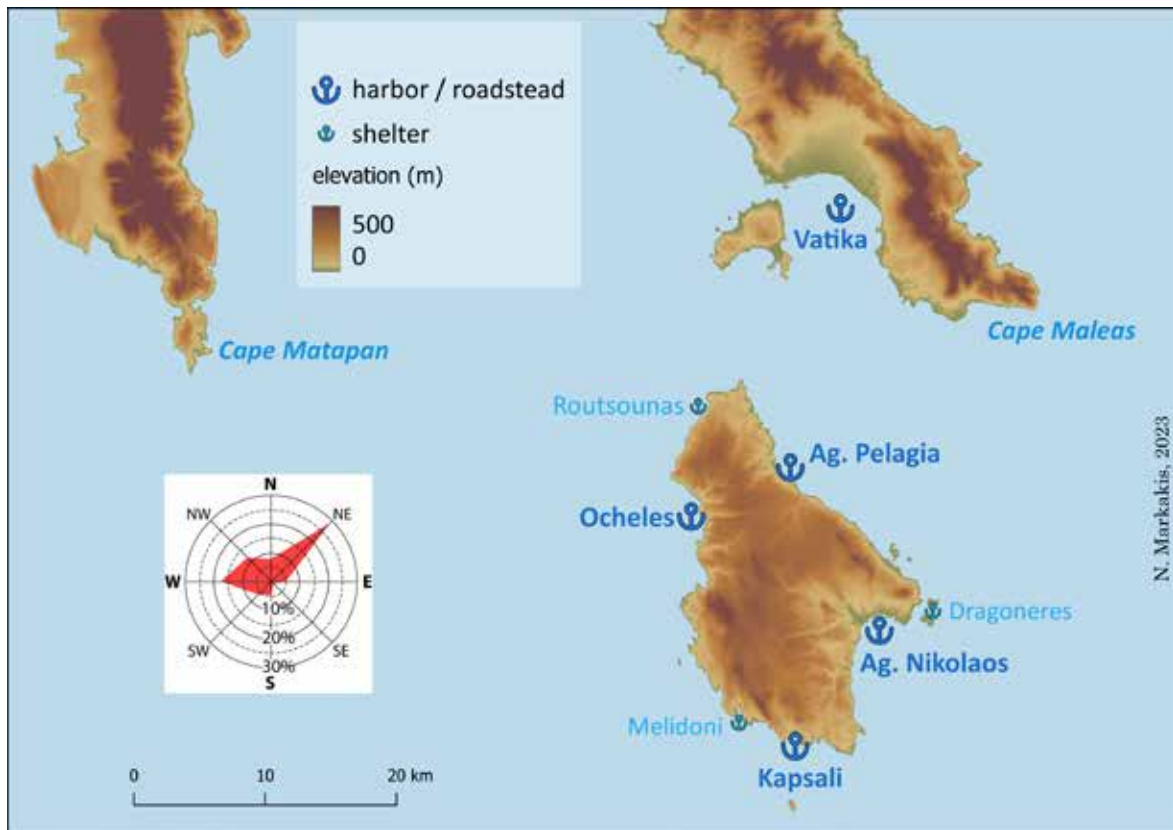


Fig. 2. Most potent harbors, roadsteads and shelters along the Maleas-Matapan-Kythera passage (map by the author).

Broodbank 2013, 16). During the Bronze Age, the island served as a maritime connectivity node and point of transfer of Minoan material culture towards the Greek mainland, the Cyclades and the Ionian Sea (Broodbank and Kiriati 2007, 264–68; Kiriati and Broodbank 2021, 376–78). During the Classical period, the island served as a port of call in the maritime trade of the Greek mainland with the north African coast (Thuc. 4.53.2–3). A deposit with several finds identified at Antidragonera (or Mikri Dragonera), an islet off the central eastern-coast of Kythera, hints towards the island's involvement in the pan-Mediterranean maritime network of the late Classical and Hellenistic period (see below).

The notation of Kythera in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* suggests that the island served as a maritime hub, connecting the land routes that ran along the western part of the southern Balkans with the sea routes traversing the Mediterranean from the 4th to the 6th century CE (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 162–63). Archaeological remains dating from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century CE attest to contacts with major trade centers of the period at the Aegean, Constantinople, the coast of Asia Minor, Cyprus and North Africa. Although reduced, they continue at least until the 9th century CE (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 165–77).

Kythera's presence in nautical charts, corroborated by archaeological remains, suggest that the island served as a port of call in Mediterranean marine trade networks during the medieval period (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 182–84). A possession of the Republic of Venice from the 13th until its collapse in the 18th century, Kythera served as a naval station for Venetian commercial traffic towards Crete, Cyprus and the Levant (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 183; Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015, 67–74).

Naval superiority

Given the above, it becomes apparent that the island was of high military value. The narrow strait between Kythera and Peloponnese forms a bottleneck, whose control would be fundamental for any naval power with

interests in the region – both in ensuring commercial traffic safety and establishing naval superiority along the strait. A clear indication of the island's value as a naval control point is the fact that for most of its known history it has been either controlled or contested by naval powers such as the aspiring Athenian thalassocracy, the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and British naval empires, as well as their antagonists and free agents. Seemingly, the island only experienced a short period of independence between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, during which Kythera was issuing its own coin, and a very short period of self-rule in the end of the 18th century (Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015, 35–95).

Details of the island's military value are well attested in textual sources, such as Herodotus and Thucydides for the Classical period (Hdt. 7.234.3–235.3; Thuc. 4.53.2–3) and reports of Venetian officials during the early modern times (Sathas 1884, 286–97; Panopoulou 2003, 215–16); as well as in significant archaeological remains of coastal defenses along the island's littoral, dating from the Archaic period until the World War II (Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015).

Piracy

Naturally, whenever naval control of the region would wane, a passage of such prominent commercial activity would also attract the interest of pirates or, in case of antagonizing naval powers, corsairs. During such periods, as the following historical review clearly demonstrates, the Kythera channel would constitute ideal hunting grounds (see also Ormerod 1924, 20–1).

Classical period

The earliest mention attesting to pirate activity in Kythera dates from the Classical period: Thucydides describes Kythera as “an island lying off Laconia, opposite Malea, the inhabitants are Lacedaemonians of the class of the Perioeci; and an officer called the Judge of Cythera went over to the place annually from Sparta. A garrison of heavy infantry was also regularly sent there, and great attention paid to the island, as it was the landing-place for the merchantmen from Egypt and Libya, and at the same time secured Laconia from the attacks of privateers from the sea, at the only point where it is assailable, as the whole coast rises abruptly towards the Sicilian and Cretan seas” (Thuc. 4.53.2–3, trans. J.M. Dent, London and New York, 1910). The passage provides a rich context regarding the complex relationship between maritime commerce and piracy control in the region during the time: Thucydides identifies the island as a station of a trading route reaching from the north African coast to the Greek mainland; signifies both the value and the threat that the island's location posed for the Laconian coast; and specifies how privateers operated in the area.

In contrast to the Classical period, assessing pirate activity in Kythera in later period is challenging, as the island appears only sporadically in textual sources until the early modern times. However, quite some information can be extrapolated from relevant mentions.

Hellenistic period

The eastern Mediterranean saw a significant rise of piracy and privateering during the Hellenistic period (Ormerod 1924, 114–50; Gabbert 1986; de Souza 1999, 43–96; Gabrielsen 2001; 2003; 2013, 143–51). Cretans are repeatedly presented in sources of the period as engaging in piracy and privateering (e.g., Diod. Sic. 27.3.1, 40.1.3; Plut. *Pomp.* 29.1; Polyb. 4.8.12, 13.8.1; Strab. 10.4.9–10), operating in the Aegean (Ormerod 1924, 131, 144–48; Brulé 1978, 2–115; de Souza 1999, 80–4) – as well as slave markets flourishing in certain Cretan cities, including Polyrrhenia at the tip of western Crete (de Souza 1999, 57–63; for a summary of the historical and archaeological data for Polyrrhenia see Perlman 2004, 1182–83). At the same time, from the Ionian Sea and along the south coast of the Peloponnese, relevant mentions include an attack by Illyrians on the Messenian coast in 230 BCE commented as being “from time immemorial the scene of the raids of the Illyrians” (Polyb. 2.5.1, trans. E.S. Shuckburgh, London and New York, 1889), an episode describing the capture of people from ancient

Mothone (Paus. 4.35.6–7) and a mention about a fleet of 15 galleys plundering and capturing the merchants between Lefkada and Cape Maleas in 217 BCE (Polyb. 5.95.1–4). With pirates and privateers operating on both sides of and along the south Peloponnese passage, it stands to reason that the Kythera straits would constitute a hotspot at the time.

Textual evidence suggests that this was indeed the case at least during the late 3rd–early 2nd century BCE. In 221/220 BC, privateers captured a royal vessel of Macedonia, near Kythera: “By sea they immediately sent out privateers, who, falling in with a royal vessel of Macedonia near Cythera, brought it with all its crew to Aitolia, and sold ship-owners, sailors, and marines, and finally the ship itself” (Polyb. 4.6.1, trans. E.S. Shuckburgh, London and New York, 1889). Presumably, during the reign of Nabis, tyrant of Sparta (207–192 BCE), and in consort with Cretan pirates, Sparta was used as a base of operations: “He [Nabis] made common cause with the Cretan pirates, and kept temple-breakers, highway-robbers, and murderers all over the Peloponnese; and as he shared in the profits of their nefarious trades, he allowed them to use Sparta as their base of operations” (Polyb. 13.8.1, trans. E.S. Shuckburgh, London and New York, 1889). Reportedly, Nabis “made the waters off Maleum a dangerous area [for the Romans] with his pirate vessels”, targeting “ships transporting supplies”, and “had the entire coastline from Cape Malea at the mercy of his pirate vessels” (Livy 34.32.12, 34.36.3, trans. J.C. Yardley, Cambridge, Mass., 2017). Even though the island is not directly mentioned, the Maleas-Kythera passage would most probably constitute the main zone of pirate operations.

Roman period

Both the three-year long campaign of Metellus against Crete, which started in 69 BCE and culminated in the conquest of the island (Diod. Sic. 40.1.1–3; App. Sic. 6.1–2; de Souza 1999, 158–61), as well as the campaign of Pompey against pirates in 67 BCE (Plut. *Pomp.* 26.3–4; Ormerod 1924, 234–41; de Souza 1999, 167–78), surely halted pirate operations in the strait: not only was Crete and its harbors brought under Roman control, but also a naval fleet operated between Delos and Sicily (Varro, *Rust.* 2, Introduction 6.2). However, Pompey’s campaign was only temporarily effective (de Souza 1999, 179–85). In the second half of the 1st century BCE, during the Roman civil wars, piracy once again became a serious threat in the Mediterranean (Ormerod 1924, 248–56; de Souza 1999, 185–95). At the time, “the sea was left unguarded” and Cilician pirates are reported as operating also at Cape Tainaron (Matapan), right across Kythera (Plut. *Pomp.* 24.2–5, trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1917).

Roman control at the passage was most probably restored after the naval battle at Actium (31 BCE). Augustus, in order to reward the Spartans for their aid at Actium, presented Kythera to C. Julius Eurycles of Sparta (Strabo 8.5.1; Cass. Dio 54.7.2). Interestingly enough, his father Lachares had been executed, apparently on the charge of piracy (Plut. *Ant.* 67.2–3; for Eurycles and the dynasty of the Euryclids see Bowersock 1961; Steinhauer 2006–2007, 2010). In the following centuries and for the first time in its known history, the Mediterranean is under the control of a single political unit and piracy is systematically suppressed along its coastline – even if the phenomenon does not completely disappear (de Souza 1999, 196–210). But perhaps relatedly, so does Kythera from surviving sources.

Medieval and early modern times

Tellingly, the island reappears on the *Life of Saint Theodore of Kythera*, a text referring to the 10th century (Oikonomidis 1967), on which Saracen pirates are mentioned as operating at Kythera, which seems to be under the control of the Byzantine navy (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 177–79). Pirate and corsair activity in the region is relatively well-documented from the 14th century onwards. Although rather one-sided, reports attest to rapidly increasing activity in the waters of Kythera during the 16th–18th centuries (e.g., Krantonelli 1985, 52–73, 163–65, 201–9, 271–76, 369–73; 1991, 19, 37–9, 47, 71, 101, 115, 137, 163–64, 197–99, 248, 252–53; 1998, 24–5, 28–33, 41–7, 84, 88–91, 98–106, 118–19, 122, 130, 137–38, 148–58, 207, 234–47). During those

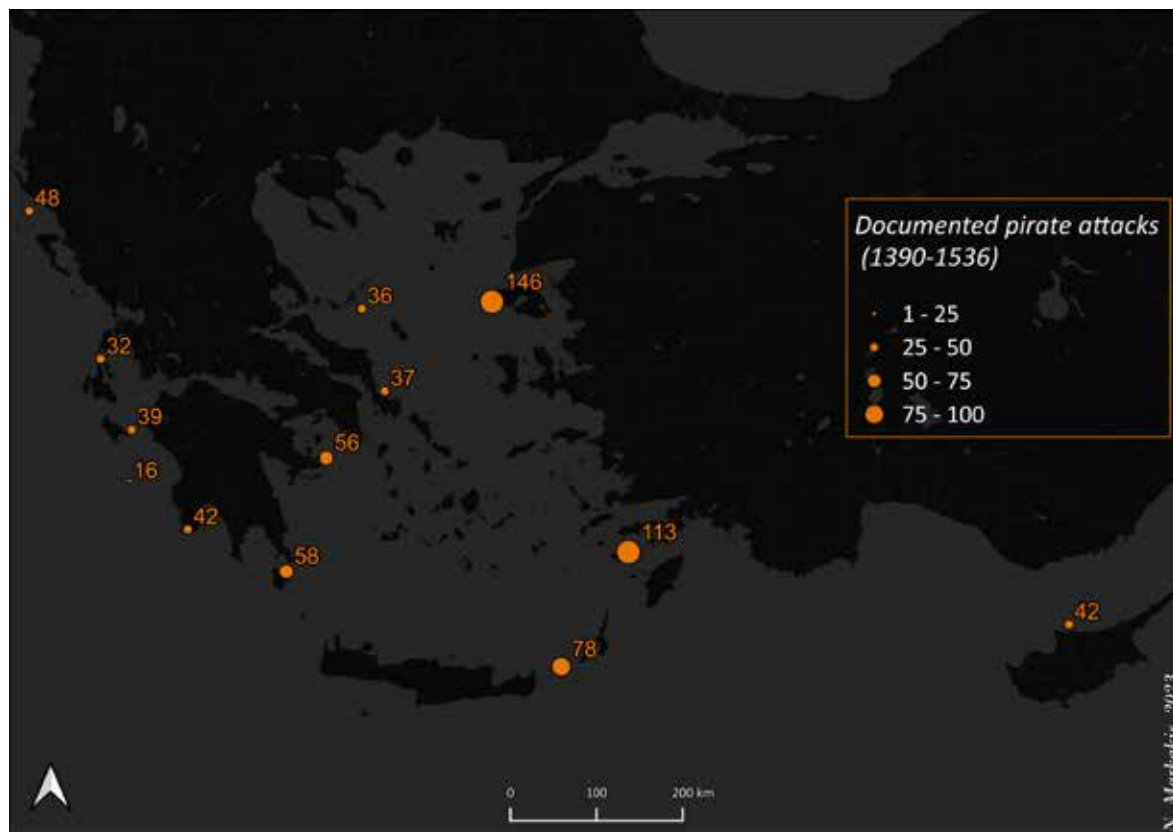


Fig. 3. Documented pirate attacks at specific ambush points in the Greek seas between 1390 and 1536 (map by the author, based on Krantonelli 1985, 387).

centuries, the Kythera-Maleas passage was one of the most preferred and lucrative ambush zones at the Greek seas (Fig. 3; Krantonelli 1985, 357–58, 369–72). Significant spikes of pirate and corsair attacks are noted during the Ottoman-Venetian wars of the 16th and 17th centuries (Krantonelli 1985, 205–9; 1991, 19). In the 18th century, a period of decay for Venice, the island gradually turned into a major staging point for pirates and corsairs, as well as the main center for selling loot in the Aegean (Krantonelli 1998, 43, 192–94).

GEO-ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY IN KYTHERA

Modus operandi of attacks at sea

Investigating the practical aspects of piracy, especially during antiquity, is inherently difficult. An attack at sea is usually a brief and violent event happening far from uninvolved witnesses. Pirates themselves are unlikely sources of information. Their surviving victims are more probable sources, but even in such cases, the details of major events, such as raids on coastal settlements, are much more likely to survive through history (Lewis 2019, 89) rather than accounts of individual cases of attacks at sea.

Such events hardly leave any clearly discernible archaeological traces. Even though agile oared galleys would be the preferred craft of choice (Casson 1971, 125–32; Krantonelli 1985, 337–56; 1998, 285–303), there is no type of vessel that was exclusively used for piracy (see, for example, Gabrielsen 2001, 223–28; Nakas, this volume). Furthermore, defining the circumstances behind a wreck event is extremely difficult and there is no telltale evidence that can be directly associated with an attack at sea with certainty, not to mention the further attribution of roles such as “pirate” or “victim”.

In the case of Kythera, given the scarce information provided by ancient sources, studying pirate operations at the passage during antiquity is by default severely limited. On the other hand, the numerous reports of attacks on the island's waters dating from early modern times can provide a valuable frame of reference. Most attacks, however, are simply described as happening "off Kythera" (e.g., Krantonelli 1985, 52, 57–8, 163–64; 1991, 47, 71, 115, 163–64; 1998, 25, 28, 45, 89–91, 130, 158, 236). Even when reports include more details, their interest usually lies at documenting damage and losses, rather than providing specifics on the event itself. As such, there is very few information on fundamental operational specifics, such as where, how and under which conditions did pirate ships attack their prey on the passage – necessary information that can assist in investigating pirate operations also during antiquity. Given the limited underwater research conducted along the island's littoral, attempting to assess the specifics of pirate and corsair activity in Kythera through archaeological proxies is challenging.

Local navigation conditions

To investigate the way in which pirates operated on the passage during antiquity, certain elements can be extrapolated by examining the fundamental environmental parameters defining navigation in the area, such as the island's geomorphology and prevailing winds, and contemporary naval technology constraints. Combined with the strategies that are known to have been commonly used by pirates in the area, the above can be used to delineate specifics of pirate activity on the waters of Kythera diachronically.

In general, pirates would prefer to target easy prey, such as ships struggling on difficult navigation conditions. Bold and experienced sailors, they would know the waters where they operated much better than passing merchants (Ormerod 1924, 31). Also, as mentioned above, they had the significant advantage of using agile rowed galleys, able to maneuver much better than bulky sailing ships. As such, instead of attacks at the open sea under good conditions, were they could not employ those advantages, they would target either on becalmed vessels (Ormerod 1924, 16; Lewis 2019, 90–1) or on vessels struggling under difficult sailing conditions – such as on dangerous coasts and narrows (Krantonelli 1985, 357–58), where sailing ships would be forced to turning in order to avoid collisions, while at the same time catching the wind (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.).

In view of this, both the narrow passage between Kythera and Maleas, as well as the island's rocky and often inaccessible coastline, whose few potent harbor locations dictate predictable choice of shelter, constitute ideal hunting grounds. Entering the Kythera-Maleas passage from the north is a sharp turn for large sailing ships. Under strong prevailing (north/northeastern) winds, they are forced into a series of turns, towards the north-eastern coast of Kythera, with a turning point a few kilometers off Ayia Pelagia, before being able to turn again into the channel (Fig. 2). Not a dangerous point but a demanding one for large sailing ships, it constitutes a probable and most of all predictable attack location. Stronger north/northeastern winds force sailing vessels even further south, where their best option is to shelter at the cove of Ayios Nikolaos. Likewise, sailing into the passage from the west under similar conditions forces ships to seek shelter at Routsounas or further south to Ocheles. Lastly, strong western winds force large sailing ships towards specific protected anchorages at the east or the south coast, namely Ayia Pelagia, Ayios Nikolaos, Kapsali and Melidoni (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). Given the predictability of those scenarios, pirates would specifically target the passages towards those safe havens, depending on prevailing wind conditions (e.g., de Nicolay 1577, 56–58).

Potent ambush points

As for where pirate ships could be stationed, a highly probably choice would be the practice of using hidden coves and headlands as ambush points (Ormerod 1924, 17–25). Their vessels concealed, by keeping watch for victims from nearby elevated positions, pirates would pounce at unsuspecting victims – a method well-attested in the Aegean (e.g., Hacke 1699, 8; Krantonelli 1985, 358) and in Kythera specifically (Krantonelli 1998, 150) during the early modern times. Similar tactics were used in antiquity (Lewis 2019, 90–2) and are attested already

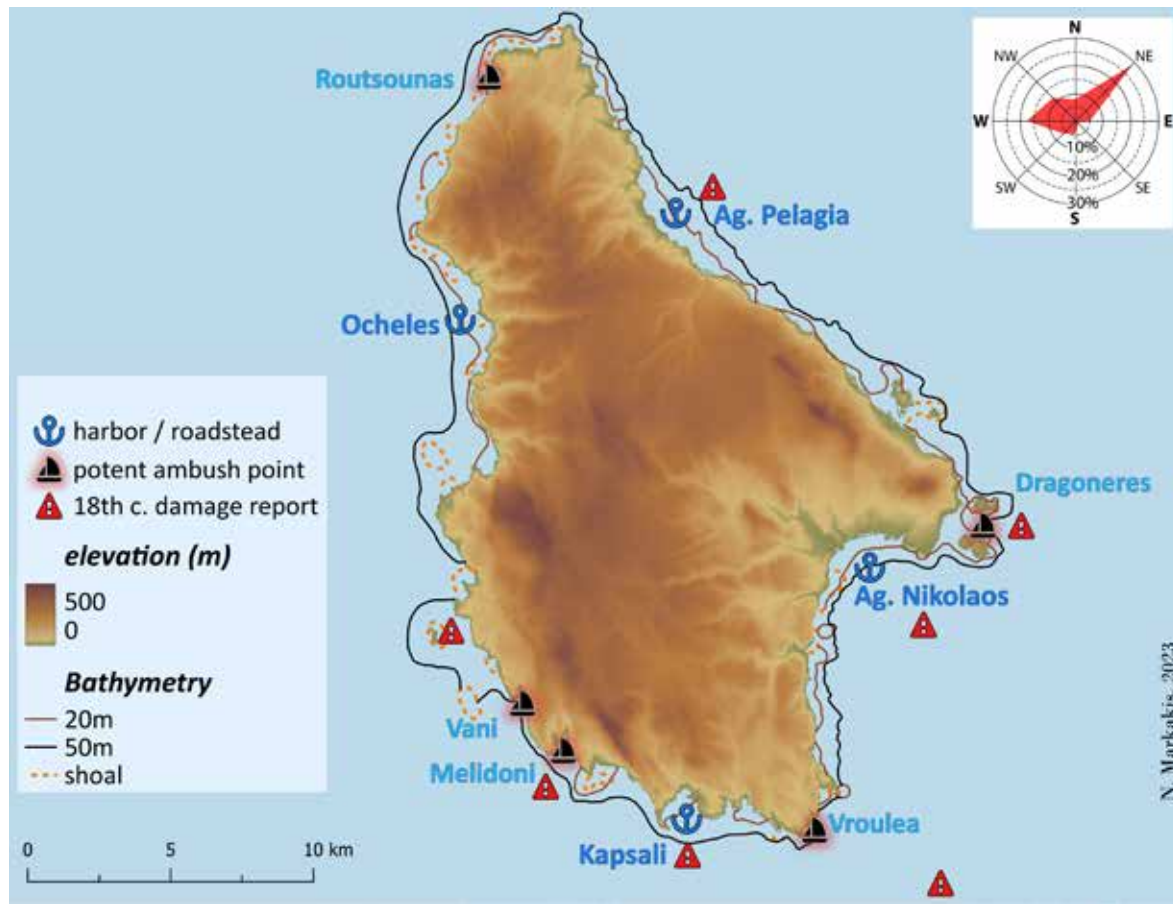


Fig. 4. Approximate locations mentioned in-text (map by the author).

in the *Odyssey*: the suitors waited to ambush Telemachus by a rocky islet with “a harbor where ships may lie, with an entrance on either side”, while “day by day watchmen sat upon the windy heights” (*Od.* 4.846–847 and 16.365–366, respectively, trans. A.T. Murray, Cambridge, Mass., 1919). Likewise, centuries later, Heliodorus describes pirates waiting in ambush hidden by a promontory (*Aeth.* 5.20).

On the other hand, it should be stressed that not every cove and islet would serve as “a lurking-ground to catch merchantmen” (Ormerod 1924, 22). In practice, there are necessary conditions that would constitute an ambush point effective:

- (a) a potent natural harbor or anchorage, easily accessible, providing sufficient shelter from prevailing winds and swells, as well as safe anchoring or beaching conditions (of a suitable depth and seabed type),
- (b) located upon marine routes, but at the same time at a safe distance from policing forces,
- (c) providing visual cover from passing ships, while offering vantage points on incoming traffic, and
- (d) access to freshwater resources.

In this regard, the only locations meeting those conditions in Kythera are the coves of Routsounas, Vani, Melidoni and Vroulea (Fig. 4):

Routsounas is a small natural harbor at a most advantageous location by the northwestern tip of Kythera. It provides good anchoring conditions and shelter from northern and northeastern prevailing winds. The bay provides visual cover to a few vessels anchored within, and the surrounding hills offer vantage points. Until recently, freshwater could be easily acquired from a coastal spring throughout the year (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). The cove appears on 16th-century nautical charts, such as those of Gaspar Luis Viegas and Antonio Millo (2006). Conveniently located upon the Peloponnese-Kythera strait, safe from prevailing winds and with

access to water, the cove of Routsounas constitutes an ideal point of ambush, from where pirates could prey both on the passages along the west coast of Kythera, as well as upon the bustling northern passage along the Peloponnese coast (for more on Routsounas see also Markakis forthcoming).

The cove of Melidoni is a potent natural harbor by the southwest tip of the island. The roadstead provides shelter from all prevailing winds, good anchoring conditions and can accommodate even a few large vessels (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). The bay provides excellent cover to vessels within, and easy access to the surrounding hills. Similar conditions are provided at the nearby cove of Vani, only 2 km to the northwest. Both coves also appear noted on the aforementioned 16th-century nautical charts. Freshwater could perhaps be acquired at the nearby small bay at Feloti, 1.5 km to the east (Danamos 1992, 312; Aggelidis et al. 2016, 16). As such, both coves constitute ideal ambush points against vessels sailing along the west and south coasts of Kythera. It should also be noted that mentions in sources from the 18th century suggest a connection with Cretan corsairs based in Kythera, possibly operating from Melidoni (Krantonelli 1998, 98–101).

Vroulea, a small cove at the southeast tip of the island provides sufficient shelter from prevailing winds (even though it is affected by northeastern winds), good anchoring (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.) and possibly access to freshwater (Danamos 1992, 312; Aggelidis et al. 2016, 19). It can accommodate only a few but well-hidden vessels and the surrounding hills provide for vantage points. Therefore, the cove is a potent ambush point at a critical location, against vessels passing along the south and east coasts of Kythera.

Closing this section, it is important to note that –except for Melidoni under certain conditions– none of the above locations could function as a permanent base of operations. As with every natural harbor location in present-day Kythera, none of those coves provide all-weather shelter. As such, unless beached, pirate vessels would have to relocate quite often.

THE DRAGONERES

In the context of this study, most interesting is the special case of the Dragoneres, two islets off the east coast of Kythera, named Dragonera and Antidragonera (Fig. 4). The islets themselves are of very low potential: the rocky and broken terrain makes for extremely limited resources and the rugged and jagged coast for limited accessibility, possible by small boat only (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). Mentioned on the *Isolario* of Antonio Millo as “insignificant reefs” (2006, 141–44), these islets were used as grazing grounds for livestock during the early modern and modern times (Saint-Sauveur 1800, 331; G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). However, despite being relatively isolated, hard to access and poor in resources, the Dragoneres are one of the most intriguing locations at Kythera.

Dragonera

At the southern islet, Dragonera, pottery fragments attest to human presence since the Early Helladic period. Ceramic scatters dating mainly from the Hellenistic period have been identified on the eastern low hill, while on the western hill stand the remains of a structure at least 25x30 m. in size, with a sizable built cistern in its center. Outside it, more structures and cisterns have been found. It has been interpreted as a fort, possibly dating after the 6th–7th centuries (Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015, 128–30), reflecting an attempt of the Byzantine empire, threatened by the Arab expansion and the ensuing rise of piracy in the coastline of Greece and the Aegean (de Souza 1999, 238–39), to retain control of the seaways towards the western Mediterranean by establishing minor control points even on small coves and islets (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 172–75).

It should be mentioned that the structure is in direct visual contact with Vigla hill at Kythera, a site with diachronic use since prehistory, located ca. 2 km. to the east, at an elevation of 355 m. (Fig. 5). Structural remains at the southern slope of Vigla hill have been interpreted as a watchtower dating to the 7th century. An

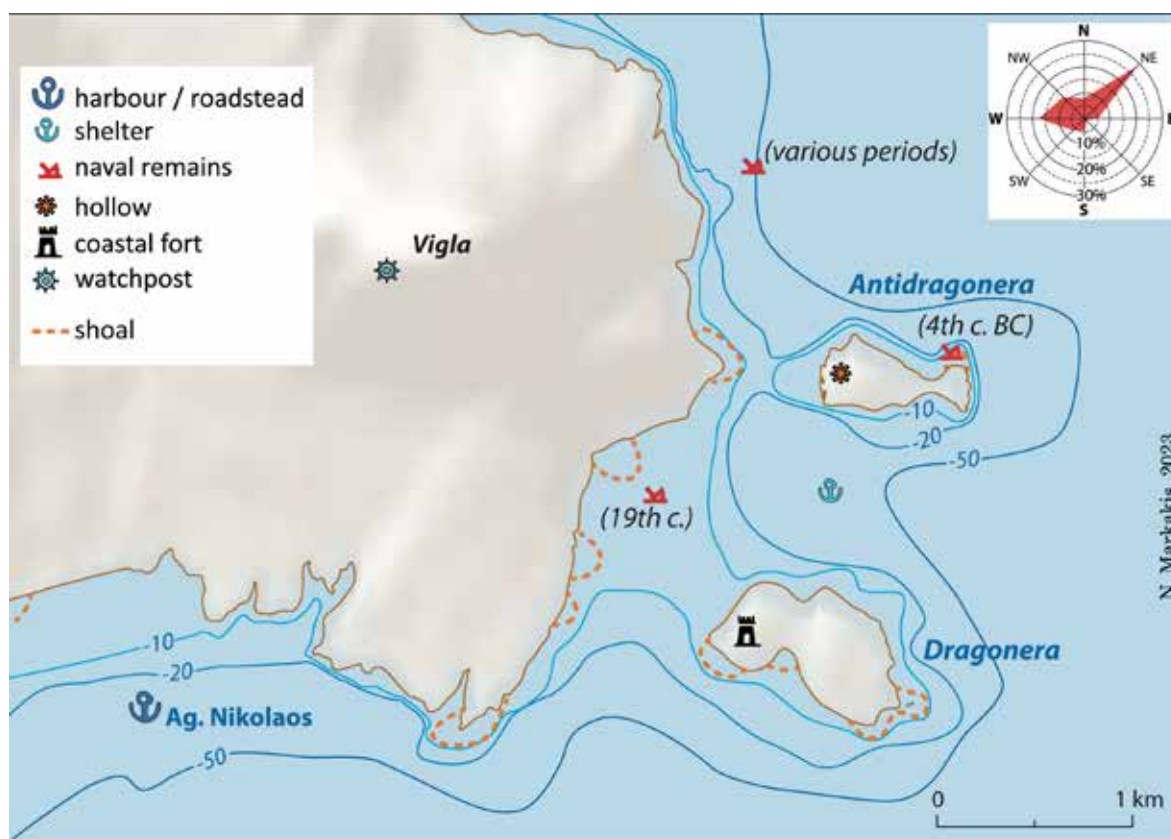


Fig. 5. Dragoneres: approximate locations mentioned in-text (map by the author).

excellent observation point, it probably served as a military installation during the medieval and early modern times (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2013, 27–41).

Even in this context, the structure's location at Dragonera is perplexing. The rocky islet itself provides extremely limited resources, is disconnected from the island of Kythera and offers limited landing capacity. In a vacuum, the site seems of low military value: as a watch post monitoring traffic, it offers no discernible advantage compared to the far superior site at Vigla, while at the same time suffering from fundamental disadvantages, such as supply availability and connectivity – thus raising the question of what could be the exact purpose of this rather isolated defensive position.

Antidragonera

Quantities of pottery and foundations of a small apsidal building identified at the northern islet of Antidragonera (or Mikri Dragonera) attest to human presence from the 4th to the 15th century (Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015, 126–28). Most fascinating are the multiple remains dating from the Hellenistic period, located on a 20x20 m. area around a hollow. No structural remains were detected on the site, but bronze nails and tiles identified have been interpreted as remains of a wooden structure with a tiled roof. Finds include hundreds of sherds from amphorae, as well as smaller pottery vessels, dating from the Hellenistic period, clay relief plaques, 17 seal stones made of semi-precious stones and glass paste and, most importantly, 234 bronze coins (and one silver) scattered around the hollow. Coins identified span from 37 different locations across the entire Mediterranean and the Black Sea and date between the 4th century and 27 BCE (Fig. 6). The site has been interpreted as an open-air sanctuary, which functioned during the late Classical and Hellenistic times, and the remains as dedications of passing mariners to Poseidon *Gaieochos* (Tsaravopoulos and Fragou 2017, 2020; see also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume) or, alternatively, *Euploia* (Papanikolopoulou 2020, 110).



Fig. 6. Geographical distribution of coins found on the islet of Antidragonera (map by P. Pentsch, based on Tsaravopoulos and Fragou 2017, fig. 15).

Naval remains

The waters off the Dragoneres are one of the few on the island that have benefitted from intensive underwater archaeological research, which resulted in the identification of:

- (a) scattered piles of pottery (mainly, of amphorae) in several places, belonging to many periods, probably jettison,
- (b) the remains of a 19th century merchant wreck, towards the east coast of Kythera, at Alevrospilia,
- (c) anchors of different periods and a large anchor stock of a type that dates chiefly from the 6th to the end of the 4th century BCE, further north, at Tourkovrahos/Avlaki (Kourkouvelis 1992, 32),
- (d) a group of nine wedge-shaped anchors, at the north coast of Antidragonera (Fig. 5). This confirmed shipwreck site has been dated to the second half of the 4th century BCE (Kourkouvelis 1992, 32–3; 1993, 32–41).

Except for the distribution of those nine anchors raising the question of whether they represent one or more shipwrecks, their location is also quite puzzling, since the position has little to offer except protection from southern winds (Kourkouvelis 1992, 33–4). Not only such winds are the least common in Kythera, but much more potent shelter can be found in nearby Diakofti. It should also be noted that ceramic remains associated with the wreck site consist mostly of storage containers and utility vessels. The excavators noted that the small quantity of ceramics, as well as their utilitarian character does not correspond to the usual remains associated with a merchant cargo ship. It was proposed that the lack of transport container remains could signify a cargo consisting of perishable materials or perhaps a warship (Kourkouvelis 1993, 39–40).

Re-evaluation of data

The first step in the re-evaluation of data from the Dragoneres' shipwreck is to determine the value of the site for navigation in the wider region. The area between the two islets and Kythera forms a small but potent refuge

that provides shelter from the prevailing northern and northeastern winds, good depth to drop anchor, but limited space, able to accommodate only a few vessels. Its potential as a shelter for “warships and other small ships” is attested in the 16th-century *Isolario* of Antonio Millo (2006, 141–44) and confirmed by present-day local fishermen (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). Strictly speaking, it is the closest refuge for vessels coming from Cape Maleas under prevailing wind conditions. Subsequently, its potential as a shelter strongly supports the interpretation of the site at Antidragonera as a marine sanctuary. Additionally, it provides with a possible reason behind the number of identified naval remains in the vicinity – perhaps reflecting failed attempts to seek shelter between the Dragoneres.

However, there are several issues that need to be addressed:

(a) Even though it can provide shelter from the prevailing north/northeastern winds, it is vastly inferior to the close-by anchorages at Ayios Nikolaos bay, which are safer from every respect, can accommodate vessels of any size and provide access to supplies. To put it differently, according to local mariners, the only reason why a vessel would choose to seek shelter between the Dragoneres instead of nearby Ayios Nikolaos would be in a case of extreme emergency, such as taking water (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.).

(b) Even though some naval remains could be interpreted as the evidence of ships unsuccessfully seeking shelter at the Dragoneres, that could be proposed only for remains roughly located between the islets and Kythera (such as the shipwreck remains at Alevrospilia), but not for the shipwreck site identified north of Antidragonera.

(c) Regarding the interpretation of the site at Antidragonera as a marine sanctuary the following elements should be considered:

(i) The site's location: the islet is relatively isolated, of limited accessibility and pretty much exposed.

(ii) The number of dedications: it is surprising that such a great number of ships (as reflected by the hundreds of remains interpreted as votive dedications) would choose to seek shelter at Dragoneres rather than the far superior anchorages in the immediate vicinity during those four centuries.

(iii) The wide provenance and chronological frame of the remains: interpreted as dedications of sailors, the coins reflect a sanctuary of a mariner's cult that is at the same time both renowned across the entire Mediterranean, but also active only during the Hellenistic period. Despite the diachronic importance of the passage for navigation, it is intriguing that a sanctuary of such inter-regional reach would be active only during this period. It is also of note that no such sanctuary is mentioned by contemporary sources.

(iv) Numerous coastal sites across the Mediterranean have been interpreted as maritime sanctuaries dedicated to various divinities, based on textual or iconographic evidence such as inscriptions and graffiti (Fenet 2016). However, none of the remains from Antidragonera are mentioned as bearing any epigraphic or other evidence that can associate them with a maritime cult.

(v) The presence of coins in votive deposits and, in many cases, coins, whose inscription testify that they constituted dedications in temples is attested in various examples during the Hellenistic period in the Mediterranean region. And even though not all votive coins would necessarily bear an inscription (Gardner 1883, 246–47; Crawford 2003), there is no mention of any epigraphic evidence that can identify any of the 234 coins discovered at Antidragonera as dedications.

An alternative interpretation

The above observations call for exploring alternative interpretations excluding a votive context. Published information of the finds from Antidragonera do not provide enough details for a thorough cross-examination with other sites from the period, but there are cases of coins interpreted as foundation deposits or remains of a sanctuary's *thesaurus* (Crawford 2003, 70–1). However, the lack of structural remains identified at Antidragonera argues against the coins being foundation deposits. Similarly stumped is the possibility of corresponding to a sanctuary's *thesaurus*, further aggravated by the lack of any evidence attesting to a sanctuary's

existence. Additionally, the isolated site's exposure raises questions as to a *thesaurus* security, especially given that pillaging of sanctuaries, albeit condemned, is attested in the region during this period (e.g., Polyb. 13.8.2; Plut. *Pomp.* 24.5; see also Ormerod 1924, 124).

On the other hand, the location's characteristics suggest a different interpretation, since the refuge between the Dragoneres constitutes an excellent ambush point. The area between the two islets provides both shelter and visual cover for up to five small (up to 20 m. long) vessels (G. Trikaliotis, pers. comm.). It is a highly advantageous location providing reach against vessels sailing both alongside the east coast of Kythera, on the route connecting Crete and the north African coast with the Greek mainland and beyond, and towards Ayios Nikolaos bay, the island's most potent anchorage and, most importantly, safest shelter from Cape Maleas: any vessel unable to cross the cape under prevailing winds would become easy prey for pirate vessels lurking between the Dragoneres. From there, sheltered and hidden, they could ambush struggling ships incoming from the north, which would have no real alternatives.

The use of the Dragoneres as prowling grounds for pirates is attested in sources dating between the mid-16th and early 19th century (de Nicolay 1557, 61; Saint-Sauveur 1800, 331; see also Krantonelli 1991, 197; 1998, 240). Based on these mentions and the location's capacity, it stands to reason that it would have been used as such by their predecessors as well. In this context, the remains identified at Antidragonera can be seen under a completely different perspective: as the remains of a loot cache. Under such a light, many previously puzzling elements can be reasoned with, such as:

- (a) The site's limited accessibility and isolation – which would constitute an advantage.
- (b) The amount and heterogeneity of the reported remains, the majority of which can be divided in three types: (1) personal items of value, such as seal stones of semi-precious materials and coins, (2) common maritime trade cargo, such as amphorae and fine-ware, (3) probably construction material, such as tiles and nails. The reason behind the occurrence of the first two types on a loot cache is self-evident, but the third less so. Even though tiles are attested as maritime trade cargo material (Rico 1995; Carre 2021), presently, there is not enough information to support such a notion. In theory, a provisional wooden structure such as the one proposed by the excavators (Tsaravopoulos and Fragou 2017, 130; 2020, 322) could also correspond to one used by pirates – perhaps a hideout or a signal station, as mentioned in a text from the 1st century BCE (Plut. *Pomp.* 24.3).
- (c) Both the high number and the wide spatial distribution of the identified coins, reflecting a sample of the total inter-Mediterranean maritime traffic passing through the Peloponnese-Crete strait, rather than only sailors under specific conditions.
- (d) The chronological frame of use of the site as provided by those coins, which not only corresponds to a period of increased pirate activity in the region, but it also terminates with the establishment of Roman influence and the subsequent imposition of order at sea – the latter providing for a reason behind the site's discontinued use.

Whether this proposed loot cache was abandoned, destroyed, or hastily emptied, those are scenarios that can only be investigated by further, detailed analysis of the remains themselves, whose number is described as substantial.

Moreover, such an interpretation can be correlated with the various naval remains from many periods identified in the surrounding waters. It could also provide an explanation for the absence of transportation vessels identified at the wreck site north of Antidragonera, also dating from the Hellenistic period. Given the available information, it is not possible to further any hypothesis on whether the remains could correspond to transports being looted and sunk, thus leaving no cargo behind, or to sunken galleys not having any by design. But in any case, it is important to note that the interpretation proposed provides a plausible explanation on why such remains are there in the first place, while opening the discussion for all above scenarios to be considered.

The proposed interpretation could also provide with a possible reason behind the presence of Hellenistic period pottery on the eastern hill of Dragonera – already suggested that it could serve as a watch post monitoring traffic (Gregory and Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2015, 128–30) – as well as shed light to the role of the

isolated fortified structure at Dragonera. A major drawback for vessels waiting in ambush at the Dragoneres is that they would be visible from Vigla hill. However, they would also be conveniently out of firing range (Marsden 1969, 86–98), at least until the introduction of canons (see, for example, Krantonelli 1998, 136–37). As such, the presence of a coastal fort within firing range of the shelter would nullify the danger of pirate vessels lurking at the Dragoneres islets – thus securing the passage along the northeastern coast of Kythera, as well as access towards the island's most potent anchorage and most probable location of ancient Kythera's main harbor.

18TH-CENTURY DAMAGE REPORTS

Lastly, it is quite interesting that this assessment of potent attack zones and ambush points correlates well with a corpus of damage reports due to incidents at sea that took place off the coasts of Kythera between 1767 and 1792. According to those documents, preserved at the Local Archive of Kythera under the general title *Prove di fortuna e processi sopra li naufraggi*, any captain or owner of a damaged ship was obliged to report the damage suffered by the ship or its cargo as well as its causes, such as weather conditions or pirate attacks (Panopoulou 1995; 2003, 222–23). Since most of this material remains unpublished, detailed information is presently limited. However, most of the locations reported either correspond to (e.g., Ayia Pelagia, Ayios Nikolaos, Kapsali, Melidoni, Dragoneres) or are well within the operational radius of the sites mentioned above (Fig. 4).

CONCLUSIONES

The Kythera-Maleas passage constitutes a key location for marine traffic since antiquity. Upon significant maritime crossroads, the island served as a major traffic enabler, providing shelter at one of the most important and most dangerous passages of the Mediterranean. At the same time, the island's waters provided the ideal setting for pirate operations: difficult navigation conditions, potent ambush locations and supply availability made for ideal hunting grounds, upon a most lucrative zone. Evidence clearly suggests increased pirate activity in Kythera in periods of crisis, whenever naval control at the passage would weaken – such as during the Hellenistic period, the 6th–8th centuries, the period of the Venetian-Ottoman wars and the collapse of the Republic of Venice.

By investigating fundamental navigation parameters, surviving mentions in written sources and reported incidents, significant information regarding operational specifics off the Kytherian coasts can be extrapolated. The most potent attack zone seems to be the northeast/east coast (Ayia Pelagia and Ayios Nikolaos). Moreover, the most likely locations for pirate ships to be stationed in ambush are the coves by the northwest, southwest and southeast tips of the island (Routsounas, Vani, Melidoni, Vroulea).

Finally, for the study of piracy in the wider Kythera region, the Dragoneres presents great interest. Based on the area's geomorphology and its attested use in later periods, it is proposed that the location served as an ambush point frequented by pirates also during antiquity. This interpretation can be correlated with the site at Antidragonera, which in this study is suggested to have been a loot cache, and possibly with finds and structural remains at Dragonera, and naval remains in the surrounding waters. In general, the sites at Dragonera provide a very rich archaeological archive for unknown periods of Kythera's history and further meticulous research could shed more light on the most intriguing topics of maritime sanctuaries, pirate activity and naval warfare in antiquity. As for the site at Antidragonera, whether those valuables were deposited by their rightful owners or extracted by pirates, the most significant element remains: they attest to the strategic importance of Kythera as a key location for maritime traffic spanning the entire Mediterranean, for both sailors, traders, navies and pirates.

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A special note needs to be made regarding the interviewing of local mariners. During the investigation of the island's maritime history, it quickly became clear that their input would be invaluable in order to truly assess navigation along the Kythera strait. Their interviews form a large part of this study. Although there are several people involved, the name of Giorgos Trikaliotis is the one most often mentioned and therefore deserves special mention.

Trikaliotis is a mariner from Elafonissos. He has over sixty years of experience at sea, twelve of which he spent aboard cargo ships, crossing the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea several times. His knowledge of the Kythera straits is unparalleled, having worked the waters off Kythera in all weather conditions, both by sail and motor, year-round, for almost five decades. Today, in his seventies, he still navigates the strait in his 10-meter-long fishing boat, a wooden *trahantiri* built in 1979, itself a showpiece of a fading boat-building tradition. His knowledge of the region's waters is not limited to his own extensive experience. The son and grandson of fishermen, Trikaliotis preserves the undocumented knowledge of seamanship and aspects of the region's maritime history passed down through generations, dating back to the late 19th century.

The reliability of the information provided by Trikaliotis has been corroborated by other local sailors and cross-checked with several related mentions in nautical guides, both contemporary and from centuries past, as well as in situ investigations conducted by the author. The information cited in this study, the result of several interviews conducted between 2022 and 2023, represents only a small fragment of this precious, largely undocumented heritage.



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The Islets as Pirate Sites

The Archaeology of Piracy on Agathonisi

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ABSTRACT

Despite the numerous references in ancient written sources to pirate practices, actions and persons, identifying archaeological evidence linked to piracy is undoubtedly very difficult. This difficulty can possibly be overcome by the systematic investigation of the numerous islets in the Greek seas. As the relevant sources testify, these islets, which did not constitute a fertile ground for normal living or cultural development, being far from the sight of the rest of society and close to sea routes, were ideal pirate places throughout time.

This paper discusses first the various uses of the islets by pirates – a long-standing pirate practice, as revealed by the written sources – and some methodological considerations that emerged during the A.P.Pir.A. project, which can contribute to the identification of archaeological sites as possible pirate bases. Then, it examines the site of Kastraki on Agathonisi in the northern Dodecanese, between Samos and Miletus, which is an excellent case study, as it is one of the few systematically excavated and published sites on a Greek islet. After a brief consideration of the pirate activity in the wider area of Samos and Miletus, a review of the archaeological findings is attempted in the light of the archaeology of piracy. Thus, in addition to the existing interpretations on the fort's various uses, the present paper proposes another possible function of this site, that of a pirate base.

“They had castles and towers and desert islands and retreats everywhere.”
(App. Mith. 14.92, trans. H. White, New York, 1899)

INTRODUCTION

Pirate activity in the Greek seas seems to have been a constant phenomenon in antiquity. It is indicative that in the database of the A.P.Pir.A. project, the number of entries with references to piracy in the Greek seas during antiquity is close to 500 (see more in Samaras, this volume). These references, of course, concern only incidents, places and persons that happened to be recorded in a written source; in real terms, the incidents, places and persons related to piracy in antiquity were probably limitless. On the other hand, the number of examples that can be demonstrated archaeologically is, so far, quite limited.

The study of references to piracy in ancient literature provides a useful contribution to this issue, as it reveals the frequency and modes of operation that ancient pirates employed. For example, it is significant that, according to Aristotle (*Pol.* 1256a–b), brigandage is listed among the five primary ways of human subsistence, alongside pastoralism, fishing, agriculture and hunting. Indeed, he points out that some of these occupations are occasionally combined to offset the limitations of a single occupation, and cites as an example the fact that

some peoples combine the practice of pastoralism with that of banditry. This reference illuminates the character of piracy in antiquity, which was an occupation less reprehensible historically than it is considered today. In past eras piracy was very common and almost always in occurrence. It should certainly be noted that the frequency and intensity of pirate activity experienced fluctuations throughout antiquity, which were of course directly related to corresponding social, political and economic circumstances. However, the study of the history of piracy by the A.P.Pir.A. project has highlighted certain diachronic characteristics of this phenomenon, including the variation in public perceptions of piracy on one's relationship to its practice (perpetrator or victim) (Samaras, this volume).

Initially, as Thucydides mentions (1.8.1), the peoples of the coastal areas, especially islanders, were the ones who most commonly indulged in piracy. Plutarch's (*Cim.* 8.3) reference to piracy by the Skyrians is emblematic, since they did not exploit their land well, turned to maritime activities and resorted to piracy, often robbing the very merchants with whom they cooperated. Allowing for the perception that pirate behavior was viewed not only as something not reprehensible but also as a show of bravery (Thuc. 1.5.1), the likelihood arises that every islander was a potential pirate when circumstances warranted. Indeed, even members of the social elite might engage in piracy, such as the tyrant of Samos, Polycrates, who seems to have carried out systematic piracy (Hdt. 3.39.3–4; for Polycrates' possible pirate activity see Carty 2015, esp. 144–48; Kuciak 2020; contra Jackson 2000, 143). Besides Polycrates, there are many examples of piracy conducted by rulers (see for example Dem. 4.34 and 50.4 on Philip II and Alexander of Pherai, respectively), or even by large cities (e.g., Thuc. 6.4.5 [Zancle], 7.26.1–3 [Athens]; Paus. 4.23.7 [Zancle]; Diod. Sic. 27.1.1 [Sparta]; Hadjidaki 1988, 476 [Phalasarna]). On the other hand, as is widely known, ancient naval powers frequently advertised the containment or even the effective suppression of piracy, actions that in fact seem to have been carried out with limited success (Engels 2016, 292–308). However, it is important to note that the official authorities did not exclusively pursue pirates, but often collaborated with them (see indicatively on Demetrius I Poliorcetes: Diod. Sic. 20.82.4, and on Mithridates: App. *Mith.* 9.63. Also, de Souza 1999, 116–18; Gabrielsen 2013, 146, 150).

Pirates were most often citizens of “normal” cities, living together with the “normal” members of society. However, when they turned to piracy for whatever reason, they usually needed places far away from their homeland and far from the eyes of respectable society, either for the purposes of preparation for piracy, for the act of piracy itself, or for the management of booty, captives and ransom payments in the wake of a successful piratical action. Another reason for the need to select remote places, from which to operate and, by extension, conceal one's identity, was the fact that the victims of piracy would often attack the pirates' homelands in reprisal (Gabrielsen 2013, 143–45). For these and other reasons mentioned below, the small uninhabited islands and islets (i.e., small islands up to 15 km² as they are defined in this paper) of the Greek seas represented an important station in the almost indiscriminate exercise of piracy.

Since islets were used quite often by pirates, the question arises whether it is possible to identify the remains of piracy archaeologically at these locations. Unfortunately, very few islets have been the subject to systematic archaeological investigation in this regard.¹ Utilizing the methodological approach of the archaeology of piracy developed by the A.P.Pir.A. project, this paper attempts to answer this question by choosing Agathonisi, an islet in the northern Dodecanese, between Samos and Miletus, as a case study. The location is presented for two main reasons. First, the excavation at the site of Kastraki by the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese, under the direction of Dr. Pavlos Triantafyllidis, and the publication of its findings presents Agathonisi as an excellent case study of a systematic archaeological investigation of an islet. Secondly, the site dates to a period (1st century BCE) and a region (Aegean), where written sources attest that piracy was on the increase (e.g., Diod. Sic. 27.3.1; Cic. *Leg. Man.* 35; Plut. *Pomp.* 24.1–25.1; Polyaeus *Strat.* 5.19.1; see more in de Souza 1999, 43–96; Gabrielsen 2001; Mendoni 2009; Pacheco 2020). Thus, by reviewing the ancient written sources and the archaeological findings from Kastraki, the possibility that the site functioned at least periodically as a pirate base presents itself.

1 The ongoing research of the S.C.I.P. project on the Cycladic islets is considered to be very important in this regard; see Knodell et al. 2020.



Fig. 1. Islands and islets mentioned in this section (map by the author).

ISLETS AS PIRATE SITES

It is a known fact that the numerous uninhabited and often arid islets of the Greek seas were fertile ground for the practice of piracy throughout history. Any sailor, who wanted to attempt piracy, could conquer or temporarily reside on an islet unhindered. The various needs of the pirates could be easily satisfied on such remote locations, including bases from which to lurk and ambush, as well as stations for the distribution of booty, the holding of captives while awaiting ransom payments, the concealment of booty, the evasion of identification, and in general the temporary need to avoid the eyes of the rest of the world.

A typical example of pirate exploitation of small islands is described in two passages of Demosthenes (7.3; 12.12–13) concerning the Peparethian pirate Sostratos and his base on Halonnesos – identified by most scholars as the remote small island Ayios Efstratios (Reger 2004, 733; for all islands and islets mentioned in this section, see Fig. 1). According to Demosthenes, all pirates conquer foreign lands, fortify them and from these strongholds launch raids against others (for a broader discussion of the use of small islands as raiding bases see Constantakopoulou 2007, 115–19). This pirate tactic is likewise stressed by Thucydides (4.53.3), who mentions that the Spartans were worried that their opponents would capture Kythera, using it as a stronghold from which to conduct pirate raids in Laconia. The islet of Myonessos in the straits of Artemision likewise appears to have served as a potential pirate base (Aeschin. *Leg.* 72; Strabo 9.5.14).

The usefulness of islets as hiding places for ambushing emerges from the description of Polyxenidas' tactic, who at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE, was hiding with his few ships behind the Cape Myonessos and the islets of Makris and Aethalia, while awaiting the best opportunity to surprise a passing Roman fleet (Liv. 37.12.1–3). The Myonessos mentioned here is not the aforementioned islet in the Strait of Artemision, but rather a cape-islet at Ionia that was also used by pirates. Livy (37.27.4–8) records that the Roman fleet, while passing from Samos to Chios, observed some pirate ships returning from a raid on Chios. The Roman fleet rushed to

expel the pirates, with the latter taking refuge in a naturally protected cape-islet, called Myonessos, resulting in a time-consuming and ultimately unsuccessful assault by the Romans, who were unable to overcome the natural advantages of the site.

One of the most typical examples of an islet as a pirate site arises from an inscription found at Syros (IG XII.5 653), which narrates an interesting account of piracy (de Souza 1999, 185; Nocita and Guizzi 2005; Mendoni 2009): after a raid on the country and city of Syros, a band of pirates headed with their captives *to the imminent opposite island of the chora of Siphnians*, which is identified by most scholars as Kitriani (Reger 1994, 262; Nocita and Guizzi 2005, 281; Pantou and Papadopoulou 2005, 92–3; Constantakopoulou 2007, 196). This islet provided the pirates either with a useful location for ransom exchanges, or with a hideout and den for raids.

Something similar happened at the islet of Pharmakoussa, where pirates, who captured young Julius Caesar as a hostage, reportedly took refuge (see below). The “commercial” phase of the piratical process began with the determination of the ransom payment and required that they remained at Pharmakoussa, while waiting for Julius Caesar’s supporters to assemble it. In this instance, it becomes clear that the pirates were little more than armed merchants, who immediately after conducting the raid, pursued negotiations for the ransom. For this reason, it was convenient for them to remain temporarily on a deserted island at a short distance from the place they had plundered, to await the ransom payment before relocating to a more advantageous harbor (Gabrielsen 2013, 148–52).

Numerous similar cases of pirates using Greek islets are also known from later periods, some of which are presented below as representative cases. For instance, a fortified pirate base of the 5th century CE is mentioned on the islet of Velopoula in the Myrtoan Sea, between Spetses and Melos (Kyrrou 2021, 235). During the 1760s, the Slavonian pirate Markos Lukovic, in collaboration with English and Greek pirates, operated from the islet of Proti, close to the west coast of Messenia (Krantonelli 1998, 44–5). More recently, during the early 19th century, the pirate Nikolaos Katramados (or Giannouzas) from Spetses used Diavolonisia in the Northern Sporades as his base (Krantonelli 1998, 254).

All these examples confirm the value of the islets as pirate sites. The use of small islands by pirates – a diachronic choice, as the history of piracy both in ancient and in later times demonstrates – either for permanent settlement or for occasional use, makes them ideal candidates for the archaeological investigation of pirate bases or stations. Apart from the fact that they were frequently utilized by pirates, Greek islets offer an additional advantage for the archaeology of piracy. Due to the generally limited extent of their occupation (as opposed to those of permanent settlements), archaeological remains encountered on uninhabited islets enjoy a higher likelihood of association with piratical use. For example, some sort of connection with piracy has been suggested for sites on islets, such as the Late Helladic IIIC settlement at Modi (an islet in the Saronic Gulf, at a short distance from Poros) and the fortified Middle Geometric settlement at Vathy Limenari on Donousa in the Cyclades (Samaras 2015, 196, 199).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the context of pirate actions and choices, several constant features seem indicative of the character and needs of pirate activity. The attempt to identify these in archaeological contexts by the A.P.Pir.A. project has resulted in an established set of criteria that indicate possible pirate activity. The archaeological evidence of piracy may be reflected both in permanent features and mobile objects, for example in iconography, in votives, in burial and shipwreck contexts, in remains of destruction caused by pirate raids, in evidence of protection measures taken against pirate threats, etc. (see also Samaras, this volume). For the identification and correlation of such contexts with piracy, corresponding criteria have been defined, based on which respective possible archaeological examples have been identified as well. It is a fact that both ancient authors and modern scholars tend to approach ancient piracy mainly from the victims’ perspective, rather than from that of the perpetrators’

themselves. For example, defensive structures, such as fortifications and towers, are very often considered to be efforts at anti-piracy protection, while a site is rarely interpreted as a pirate base. For this reason, this paper focuses on the archaeological evidence of the pirate base.

The term *pirate base* is used here to describe any settlement, in which a small or large part of the community is occasionally or consistently occupied with piracy. The size of pirate bases can vary from extremely small sites to very large settlements. Otherwise, they do not differ substantially from non-pirate settlements, making them very difficult to distinguish. Nevertheless, pirate bases tend to present certain features, which may help to recognize them. These features constitute potential criteria for identifying pirate bases, as outlined by the A.Pir.A. project (see Samaras, this volume), and are briefly summarized here:

- First of all, the choice of location tends to be close to the sea but “invisible”, close to major sea routes, yet, seemingly unsuitable for habitation, yet, exhibiting topographical features that are favorable to harborage and piratical activities.
- In addition, the sites are defensible, whether through selection of naturally defensible sites or through the construction of fortifications.
- The site displays evidence for occupation of relatively short duration (especially in the case of small settlements), in combination with the discovery of valuable finds that seem unusual for such a context.
- The site exhibits a decidedly maritime orientation with archaeological data indicating that a significant part of the community's activities was connected to the sea.
- The site exhibits evidence of warlike character, with archaeological data indicating that at least some members of the community were involved in warlike activities.
- The existence of subsequent pirate bases at the same location or in the immediate vicinity, indicating that certain topographical features may have favored pirate activity diachronically.
- The contextualization of these archaeological sites within a recorded chronological moment in which piracy is known to have flourished.

More “specific” criteria could also be added to the above. For example, in the case of piracy during the Hellenistic period –on which the present paper focuses– the abandonment of a settlement, the cessation of some phase of occupation, or the change of its functions in the period around 67 BCE, when Pompey's famous “anti-pirate” campaign was conducted (de Souza 1999, 149–79), may serve as additional criteria for identifying a pirate base.

CASE STUDY: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PIRACY ON AGATHONISI

In the present paper, the aforementioned criteria are applied in the case of the Agathonisi fortress. Using the information provided by the written sources on the pirate uses of the islets, and on the reports of piracy in the wider area of Agathonisi, the archaeological findings from the site are evaluated to test the plausibility of piracy in this case.

Pirate activity in the sea area of Samos and Miletus

The islet of Agathonisi is located in the seascape of Samos and Miletus, for which there are several references to pirate activity in both ancient and modern times (Fig. 2). Starting in the Archaic period, the case of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, has already been mentioned. It is equally possible that Aeaces, Polycrates's father, also engaged in piracy (Carty 2015, esp. 53–66; Kuciak 2020, 59; contra Jackson 2000, 144–47). Moreover, several traditions associate Archaic Samos with piracy, such as an oracle mentioned by Plutarch (*Quaest. Graec.* 55), according to which the Samians were told to relocate to the opposite coast of Mycale and to engage in piracy for a period of ten years in order to defeat their enemies (Thomas 2019, 308–11). An additional oracle related



Fig. 2. The area around Agathonisi, with the sites mentioned in this paper (map by the author).

to piracy is recorded in an inscription of the same period from the sanctuary at Didyma of Miletus (McCabe and Plunkett 1985, no. 647). From this inscription, it is deduced that some unnamed persons asked the oracle whether it would be justified to commit a raid and Apollo responded affirmatively (Jackson 1995).

At the beginning of the 5th century BCE, the tyrant of Miletus, Histiaeus, seems to have participated in pirate activities (Hdt. 6.5.3, 6.26.1; Blamire 1959, 149–50; Chapman 1972, 566–67), while at the end of the same century Lysander informed Sparta of his naval victory at the Aegospotami by dispatching a Milesian pirate, Theopompos, as his messenger (Xen. *Hell.* 2.1.30; de Souza 1999, 33). In 430/429 BCE, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, an Athenian flotilla led by Melesander was sent to the region of Caria and Lycia to prevent the pirate ships of the “Peloponnesians” from using these coasts as bases, from which to plunder passing merchant ships (Thuc. 2.69.1; Hornblower 1991, 354–56; de Souza 1999, 31–2).

During the Hellenistic period, a 3rd century BCE inscription from Miletus refers to a treaty between Knossos and Milesians, according to which the sale of Milesian slaves to Knossos and vice versa was forbidden (*IC I viii 6**; for other decrees between Miletus and several Cretan cities, see Carless Unwin 2017, 152). Testimony of this sort is usually taken as indirect evidence of piracy, as capture by piracy was one of the main sources of slaves. Indeed, several such treaties between cities known to have engaged in piracy are on record (de Souza 1999, 62–3, 68–72; Gabrielsen 2001, 234–36). Even more important for the purposes of this paper is Strabo’s assertion that “the island Lade lies close in front of Miletus, as do also the isles in the neighborhood of the Tragaeae, which afford anchorage for pirates” (14.1.7, trans. H.L. Jones, Cambridge, Mass., 1929).

At this point, the case of Julius Caesar’s abduction by pirates outside Pharmakoussa in 75/74 BCE should be revisited (Ward 1975, 1977; de Souza 1999, 140–41; Osgood 2010, 334–36; Álvarez Pérez-Sostoa 2011, 77–8). This is undoubtedly the most famous incident of ancient piracy, a fact revealed by its mention by several authors of the Roman period (e.g., Vell. Pat. 2.41.3–43.3; Val. Max. 6.9.15; Plut. *Caes.* 1.4–2.4; Polyaeus *Strat.* 8.23.1; Suet. *Iul.* 1–2; *De vir. ill.* 78.3; Peter, *HRRel.*, Vol. 2, 87 fr. 30; see extensively Günther 1999). Most of

these authors report that Julius Caesar was apprehended near Pharmakoussa. The only exception is Polyaeus, according to whom the pirates captured their famous victim close to Cape Maleas in the Peloponnese and remained outside the walls of Miletus until the ransom was delivered. This reference implicitly suggests that Pharmakoussa belonged to the *chora* of Miletus.

Plutarch and Polyaeus refer to the pirates who captured Julius Caesar as Cilicians, while the other sources do not specify their identity. Therefore, it cannot be certain whether the pirates were Cilicians, Milesians or whether a mixed band – a fairly common occurrence in pirate crews. Perhaps, there was confusion between the terms *Cilicians* and *pirates* (App. *Mith.* 14.92) or perhaps the pirates presented themselves as coming from a distant homeland (e.g., Cilicia), to hide their real identity and to protect (nearby) homeland from reprisals, or perhaps the relevant sources, which are all considerably later than the event, wanted to attribute the incident to some unknown or foreign pirates. Indeed, after the final defeat of Mithridates and the end of the Mithridatic wars, cities like Miletus ceased trying to strike a balance between the two conflicting powers (Rome and Mithridates) and sided, willingly or unwillingly, with Rome (see Kleiner 1968, 19; Sarantidis 2020, 55–6; Cicero (*Verr.* 2.1.89), likewise, refers to the imposition of taxes “by the Roman people” and the participation of Miletus in the expulsion of the pirates).

In any event, whether the pirates had Pharmakoussa as their base or were operating outside of it, or whether they happened to locate themselves in the vicinity only once, it is difficult to accept the idea that they went unnoticed by a passing ship or by guard troops, given the presence of defensive forts and watchtowers throughout the Milesian seaboard territories, including those on Pharmakoussa itself (for the supervision of these islands, see Sarantidis 2020, 203–23, figs. 112–21). Moreover, both the undisturbed visit of a large group of men anchored in an island cove for thirty-eight days, and the fact that Julius Caesar himself, after he redeemed himself and assembled a fleet, returned to the island to find the pirates still situated at the same place, would seem to indicate that the pirates in question were able to reside on these islands (or, at least, on Pharmakoussa) and conduct their activities unhindered during this period.

However, pirate activity in this islandscape was not limited to antiquity; in fact, pirates continued to operate there in modern times. The Englishman Anthony Roberts, a pirate who was himself taken hostage by pirates in 1692, describes the seasonal but systematic use of the region by pirates, stating that after wintering on islands, such as Paros, Antiparos, Ios and Melos, pirates would sail to Phournoi in early March: “And then they go for the Furnoes [Phournoi], and lie there under the high land hid, having a watch on the hill with a little flag, whereby they make a signal, if they see any sail; they flip out, and lie athwart the boak of Samos, and take their prize; they lie in the same nature under Necaria [Ikaria], and Gadronise [Gaidouronisi], and Leppiso [Leipsoi] in the spring and forepart of the summer” (Hacke 1699, 8; see also Koutsouflakis, this volume; Koutzakiotis, this volume). It should be noted that *Gaidouronisi* is an earlier name for Agathonisi, which continued to be used as a pirate site in the following century (see Krantonelli 1998, 110, 179).

The archaeological research on Agathonisi

Agathonisi is located between Samos and the cluster of Dodecanese, connecting this area with the Ionian and Carian coasts of Asia Minor. More generally, in the area west of Miletus and south of Samos there is a large number of small islands and islets, of which, at least during the Hellenistic period, only Korsiai (Phournoi) seems to have been Samian territory (Koutsouflakis, this volume). In particular, the islands of Lepsia (Leipsoi), Arkitis (Arkioi), Patmos, Leros, Tragia (Agathonisi), Pharmakoussa (Pharmakonissi) and Lade (which in antiquity was an islet, although today it forms the Batmaz Tepeleri hill in the mainland region of Batiköy, see Greaves 2002, 3; Brückner et al. 2014, 86) belonged to the territory of Miletus, as evidenced by epigraphic and other evidence (Sarantidis 2020, 70–85; Fig. 2). Towers or/and fortifications of this period have been found on all these islands. Sarantidis (2020, 164, 192, 202–3) argues that these features performed a variety of functions: protection from pirates appears to have been the main one, but that they also played roles in trade, agricultural and craft production as well.



Fig. 3. Agathonisi (Tragia) in the complex of ancient Tragaeae, with the modern toponyms (map by the author).

The islet of Agathonisi was referred to in antiquity as *Tragia* (Thuc. 1.116.1; Plut. *Per.* 25.3; Steph. Byz. s.v. Τραγία; see also Reger 2004, 733) or *Tragaea* (Plin. *HN* 4.71). It is surrounded by six small non-harbored rocky islets, which in antiquity formed the cluster of the *Tragaeae* (Strab 14.1.7; Plin. *HN* 5.135; see also Triantafyllidis 2006, 177; 2010, 9–10; Marketou 2023, 47). Although scattered evidence of antiquities has been found throughout the island of Agathonisi (Triantafyllidis 2006, 180–81; 2010, 12–6), the main settlement appears to have been located at Kastraki, on the northern coast of the island (Fig. 3).

At Kastraki, the remains of a coastal fortress stand on a small cape at the northern end of the Kleftos hill (Fig. 4). The fortress and the small Hellenistic settlement enclosed within it underwent systematic archaeological investigation by the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Dodecanese, under the direction of Dr. Pavlos Triantafyllidis (2006, 2010, 2014, 2015; Giannas 2014; Palamida et al. 2017; Sarantidis 2020; Poupaki 2021). The settlement is built on three terraces, defined by successive walls, which enclose a total area of approximately 2,500 m² (Fig. 5). Excavated remains indicate that it was constructed at the end of the 4th century BCE. The location of this fortified settlement at the only closed and sheltered bay on the northern side of the islet was possibly related to the need to control the sea route along the northern coast of the islet (Triantafyllidis 2015, 95–6; Sarantidis 2020, 155–57, especially on the visibility of the site see 164–65, 203–11).

On the highest terrace, there is a rectangular tower, with a large cistern in its basement that served the water needs of the entire settlement (Sarantidis 2020, 157–59). Storage areas have been identified in the lower terraces, while storage and transport vessels, utilitarian vessels and domestic objects, as well as hand mills and other lithic tools, reveal the commercial and residential character of the fortified settlement (Poupaki 2021). The finds of fishing hooks and weights for nets demonstrate that the inhabitants also engaged in fishing, while other finds indicate purple-dye production and beekeeping (Triantafyllidis 2015, 100–2; Sarantidis 2020, 199–201). The excavators also recovered a rare glass skyphos, unique at least for the Agathonisi settlement (Triantafyllidis 2014).



Fig. 4. The small, fortified settlement at the Kastraki promontory (Triantafyllidis 2010, fig. 12).



Fig. 5. Plan of the fortified settlement at Kastraki, with the three terraces visible, and the shipsheds to the southeast (Sarantidis 2020, fig. 86).



Fig. 6. The inner side of the strong fortification wall at Kastraki (Triantafyllidis 2010, fig. 17).

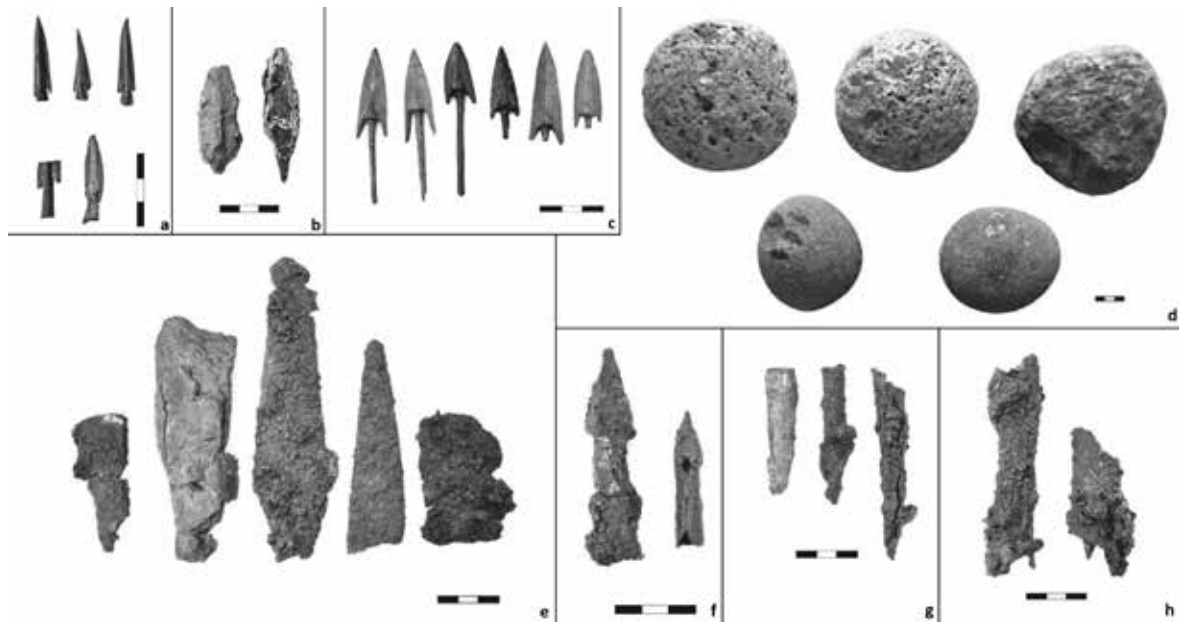


Fig. 7. Weaponry found at the site: (a–c) bow arrowheads, (d) stone catapault projectiles, (e) swords and knives, (f) gastraphetes arrowheads, (g) butt-spikes, (h) spearheads (after Giannas 2014, figs. 1–8).

Alongside these daily or seasonal “peaceful” activities of the Agathonisi inhabitants, however, warlike finds point to a military component to their lives. Apart from the strong fortification walls (Fig. 6), daily or seasonal “warlike” activities are also documented by the large number of weapons (Fig. 7), indicating the presence of soldiers or guards, much like the Milesian guards mentioned in an inscription found at Leipsoi (Manganaro 1963–1964, no. 21). Most of these are projectile weapons, such as iron and bronze arrowheads for bows and gastraphetes. Iron swords and knives, spearheads and butt-spikes were also found, while of particular interest was the discovery of stone catapault projectiles (Giannas 2014). In addition, at a distance of about 18 m. from the southern fortification wall, the remains of two ramps for shipsheds are visibly carved into the face of the coastal bedrock (Triantafyllidis 2015, 95; for the use of such shipsheds see Blackman et al. 2013, esp. 231–53). Thus, as the numerous arms reveal, along with the productive and commercial activities, the settlement was constantly guarded and fully armed.



Fig. 8. Roof tile from Kastraki with sealed inscription referring indirectly to the Milesian sanctuary of Apollo (Sarantidis 2020, fig. 23).

The vast majority of the bronze and silver coins found within the fortified settlement came from Miletus (Triantafyllidis 2010, 22). Furthermore, the connection with Miletus is also revealed by a seal on a roof tile of a public building, which states the following: “ἐπὶ τοῦ/τρίτου/θεοῦ πό/λεως εὐ/λιμένου νίκης” (“during [the period of] the third god of the well-harbored city victory”) (Fig. 8). From the study of the inscription, it follows that when the god –who is identified by most scholars as Apollo Didymeus of Miletus– held the office of the *stephaniphoros* for the third consecutive time, a victory of the “well-harbored city” occurred (Triantafyllidis 2015, 100–1; Sarantidis 2020, 80–1). The excavators conclude, therefore, that the roof tiles belonged to a public building (a sanctuary?), dating to the third consecutive *stephaniphoria* of the Milesian Sanctuary of Apollo, which will have occurred during the 2nd or the early 1st centuries BCE.

During the same late 2nd–1st century BCE period, the excavators identified building modifications to the interior spaces and the addition of new terracing at the site (Triantafyllidis 2015, 100; Sarantidis 2020, 160–62). According to the excavators, these additions possibly resulted from a construction program carried out in coordination with a renewed Roman initiative along the coast of Asia Minor. During this period, the Roman Senate passed the *lex de provinciis praetoriis*, calling on the cities of Asia Minor to actively cooperate in the fight against the pirates, many of whom were employed as naval mercenaries by Mithridates (see de Souza 1999, 108–15; Geelhaar 2002). The rebuilding and reorganization of the defenses at Kastraki are attributed to this Roman-inspired military mobilization (Triantafyllidis 2015, 98; Sarantidis 2020, 163–64). Eventually, the main gate of the fortress on Agathonisi ceased to function and the entire settlement was filled and levelled by a homogeneous layer before the middle of the 1st century BCE. Evidence of dated amphorae also ceases at this time (Palamida et al. 2017, 85–90). Beside this gate, the purple-dye workshop was reorganized and expanded to become the main activity of the settlement through the 1st century CE (Triantafyllidis 2010, 35; 2015, 100; Sarantidis 2020, 160–62). In other words, the excavation data from Kastraki reveal that the character of the fortified settlement was not exclusively military. Significant evidence testifies to activities related to production and trade. It is certain that the military component to the settlement coexisted with its productive and commercial activities throughout the Hellenistic period (Triantafyllidis 2015, 101, 103; Sarantidis 2020, 163).

Kastraki, Agathonisi: fortified installation for the sea defense of Miletus or pirate base?

The archaeological data from Kastraki raise questions about a possible connection to piracy. Based on the archaeological and epigraphic data presented briefly above, the excavator of the site, Dr. Pavlos Triantafyllidis, reasonably argues that the construction of this fortified installation was a state-sponsored project. It is undeniable that both the period of use of this fort and its various building modifications and repairs in the late 2nd–1st century BCE coincided with a period of intense pirate activity (Triantafyllidis 2015, 98; Sarantidis 2020, 220–21). During this period, as Plutarch asserts (*Pomp.* 24.2–5), pirate fleets grew and multiplied, pirates took part as mercenaries in the conflicts of the hegemon, attacking merchant ships, islands, coastal cities and even large sanctuaries. Prominent men, who saw the potential for greater wealth and glory, likewise joined the pirates. Pirate harbors and roadsteads, fortresses and signal-stations were established throughout the seas, harboring light and fast pirate ships, fully crewed with skillful sailors and warriors. On many shores, pirates temporarily took up residence, feasting and reveling while awaiting ransom for their captives. They often flaunted their success by decorating their warships with gilded sails and purple sails.

Given this description by Plutarch, it is worth considering that the available evidence from Kastraki conforms perfectly with what is expected on a pirate base, based on the criteria listed above for a pirate base. First of all, the site at Kastraki was situated along a central sea route and with topographical features favorable to an anchorage. This put it proximate to maritime traffic. However, its topography rendered visible from sea only from limited vantage points. This offered the potential to assault victims by surprise. These features are familiar on sites chosen by pirates. The topography of the fortress calls to mind the words of Theophrastus (*Char.* 25.2), who describes as a coward the man who, when sailing at sea, thinks that every cape resembles a pirate ship. Moreover, the warlike character of this small settlement, results from its strong fortification and the rich and varied weaponry found at the site. The existence of a sanctuary and, above all, the abundance of finds that indicate trade and production activities make the settlement more likely to have been a permanent one as opposed to a temporary military garrison installed for the purpose of observing and pursuing potentially menacing warships.

The maritime and trade orientation of its inhabitants, in combination with unique finds, such as the glass skyphos, are not typical finds in a military environment, neither does Kastraki's military identity accord with the remains of an otherwise small settlement engaged in beekeeping and fishing activities. Coins, amphorae and other objects from several regions (Triantafyllidis 2015, 100; Palamida et al. 2017, 90–93; Poupaki 2021, 131–3) do not necessarily imply direct trade relations with these cities, as the possibility that some of them may have come from raids on passing ships from these regions cannot be ruled out (for the direct relationship between trade and piracy, see Gabrielsen 2013, 147–53). Convinced that the site served as a fortress with an anti-piratical function, Sarantidis (2020, 164–65) attributes its relatively limited visibility to the inhabitants' desire to guard their goods, pointing to the warehouses' relative proximity to the military shipsheds. However, this same proximity does not rule out the possibility that the warehouses served a need for unloading stolen goods from raiding ships.

Moreover, the two small shipsheds of Agathonisi are just as likely to have been used by pirates to maintain their ships, the repeated cleaning of which was essential to maintain speed and maneuverability and as such was systematically carried out by pirates until modern times (see also Koutzakiotis, this volume). Alongside this function, the shipsheds may also have served to conceal the pirate ships and better enable their crews to ambush potential victims (for pirate use of shipsheds, see Baika 2007–2008; Blackman et al. 2013, 238–41). Similar small naval stations (or roadsteads) with limited number of shipsheds have been found, among others, in Antikythera, Tripitos and Matala on Crete and in Ayios Dimitrios in the Krissaios Gulf (Blackman et al. 2013, 231–53, 389–92, 518–24; Valavanis 2015; Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume; for pirate activity of Hellenistic Crete see Brulé 1978; de Souza 1998; Perlman 1999). On the mentioned islet of Ayios Dimitrios, two shipsheds have been identified that serviced repairs and surprise raids on passing ships. This work is attributed by Valavanis (2015, 120) to the Aitolians, who occupied this area and were widely known for piratical activity (de Souza 1999, esp. 70–6; Grainger 1999, esp. 3–25; Scholten 2000).

The argument that the fortress of Agathonisi functioned as a pirate base is corroborated by the fact that it was founded and utilized during the Hellenistic period –when pirate activity was at its peak– as well as by the fact that, following the eradication of the pirates by the Romans, the function of the site transited to the production of purple garments, for which Miletus was celebrated in Roman times (Sarantidis 2020, 199; on the production of purple garments in Miletus, see Herrmann 1975). Moreover, the evidence of repairs and remodeling to the fortress of Agathonisi, combined with the presence of weapons and stone and metal projectiles, indicate that actual conflict occurred at the fortified settlement, which resulted from fending off of external attacks. A similar scenario has been posited for the Antikythera fort (Tsaravopoulos 2004, 329, 335, 339–40; Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume), as well as for Vathy Limenari on Donoussa (Samaras 2015, 199), two sites that have been suggested to have been used as pirate bases. Finally, it is also worth noting that the toponym *Kleftos* (i.e., thieving) for the low mountain, at the foot of which the fort is situated, is a common name for places where the pirates of the Ottoman and modern times concealed their treasure (Triantafyllidis 2006, 181; see also Krantonelli 1998, 110, 179). If one combines all this with the above-mentioned allusion of Strabo (14.1.7) to the presence of pirates lurking in hidden coves among the islands surrounding Miletus, the likelihood arises that the harbor of the fortified settlement of Agathonisi was one such cove.

The possible dual character of the fortress of Agathonisi

In view of all the issues raised above, is it possible that the fortress of Agathonisi was intended to protect the inhabitants of Miletus against pirates, and yet was on occasion exploited by pirates? As is known in the case of Antikythera (Tsaravopoulos 2004, 327–29; Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume), Aigilia was an outpost fortress of Phalasarna, that on occasion was employed by some of its inhabitants for purposes of piracy (Hadjidaki 1988, 2020). The same situation appears to have occurred on the islet of Ayios Dimitrios in the Krissaios Gulf, which was intended to function as an outpost fortress of the Aitolian Chaleion, but very likely evolved into an Aitolian pirate base (Valavanis 2015, 120). The islet of Minoa in Megara seems to have functioned similarly: although a fortress was established for the defense of the city, the inhabitants promptly used it to conduct pirate raids (Thuc. 3.51.1). In the same manner that these sites were constructed in the aforementioned islands and islets by powerful cities for defensive purposes, but they seem to have functioned for pirate activities as well, the fortress at Agathonisi may have been used not only for the defense of the city of Miletus, but also for piracy. For what it is worth, Hellenistic towers have likewise been identified on the island of Lade, which is mentioned by Strabo as a pirate base, as well as on the island of Pharmakoussa, where Julius Caesar's pirates allegedly resided (for these towers see Sarantidis 2020, 119–20 and 166–69, respectively).

Of course, the cooperation of official authorities with pirates or even the practice of piracy by legitimate naval fleets is hardly surprising. One such example is cited by Demosthenes (8.24–28) concerning the Athenian general Diopieithes in the mid-4th century BCE. Lacking the necessary resources to conduct his naval operations, he actually resorted to offering “protection” for a fee to the Chians, the Erythraians and other Greek states in Asia Minor, as well as engaging in overt acts of piracy by attacking merchant ships to feed and pay his troops (de Souza 1999, 36–8). Another incident of cooperation between a well-known city and pirates is described by Polyaeus (*Strat.* 5.19.1): Aenetus, who is described as a general of Demetrius I Poliorcetes and the commander of Ephesus' garrison, regularly offered shelter to pirates willing to maraud neighboring areas. However, Polyaeus continues, Lysimachus' general Lycos was able to bribe one such pirate chief named Andron, who was using Ephesus as his base, to betray its defenses and thereby enable Lysimachus to seize the settlement. In other words, pirates were very often employed by legitimate authorities, provided, of course, such a situation was mutually beneficial.

In short, a similar argument can be made for the fortress of Kastraki on Agathonisi. This settlement could certainly have functioned as an outpost fortress of Miletus and cooperated with the city, as the numerous finds that connect it with the city reveal. At the same time, however, the people who lived there –or, at least, some of them– alongside their other activities, may very likely have engaged in systematic, seasonal or opportunistic

piracy, possibly at the expense of victims, who were not allies of Miletus but were regarded rather as neutral parties or as adversaries. The coexistence of military, artisanal and commercial activities, as evidenced by the remains at Agathonisi, is a key characteristic associated with pirate communities.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, this paper does not dispute the likelihood that the fortified settlement on the islet of Agathonisi was an outpost fortress employed by the city of Miletus to defend against threats by sea, just as the other islets of the same city probably functioned. What is argued here is that the fortress could have possessed another dimension, that of its use by pirates, either systematically or occasionally. This alternate dimension is indicated by many of the archaeological remains that have come to light from the systematic excavation and study of the site and is supported by the ancient sources, particularly by Strabo's reference to pirate activity on "the isles in the neighborhood of the Tragaeae" (14.1.7, trans. H.L. Jones, Cambridge, Mass., 1929). Thus, since the archaeological data from the excavation of the fort at Katraki on Agathonisi fit most of the criteria mentioned at the beginning of this study and in what is expected of a pirate base, and since the sources implicitly indicate this, it needs to be considered as such.

The simultaneous use of the islets for pirate and non-pirate activities does not necessarily pose a problem to this interpretation. On the contrary, this seems to have been the predominant nature of piracy, since, as the sources confirm, pirates never engaged solely in this occupation, but rather they were active members of society and carried out various activities, including piracy. It, therefore, needs to be recognized that the main step in finding the archaeological evidence of piracy requires that we come to terms with the frequency of piracy in antiquity as well as its character. Likewise, the methodology of the archaeology of piracy is important for the identification of the archaeological data associated with this behavior. Thus, not only from the sources, but also from the archaeological data, it is possible to comprehend how deserted and remote islets became crucial sites for pirates diachronically, as they could serve many of their activities. The topographical data of the islets reveal ideal features for pirate bases, for lookout posts, for hiding places, for lurking and ambush, for temporary setups for the distribution of booty or the short term stays for ransom payments, for the concealment of booty, for the concealment of evidence of piratical activity, and generally for temporary places to evade the gaze of eyes of the rest of the world. Thus, isolated islets, which very often remain isolated from archaeological research as well, constitute a fertile ground for the identification of archaeological data of piracy.

On the assumption that piracy can eventually be identified archaeologically, we hope for the wider use of the methodology of the archaeology of piracy by scholars and for the eventual identification not only of pirate bases in the countless islets of Greek seas, but also of other manifestations of the archaeological evidence of piracy. The new methodology should not only be applied to ongoing and future archaeological investigations, but also to the data that already exists from past excavations. And that is because, "*the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes*" (Proust 1927, 559).



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Trade and the Elimination of Piracy

The Case of Hellenistic Rhodes

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ABSTRACT

Throughout classical antiquity, several naval powers attempted to eliminate piracy, as this activity represented a constant threat to human safety and the efficient conduct of maritime trade. Among these powers, Hellenistic Rhodes holds an exceptional place, due to its systematic efforts for the elimination of pirate activity, which was at its peak during this period. This paper examines the relationship between Rhodes and the pirates, and in particular the causes behind the Rhodian anti-piracy policy and the ways in which this policy was pursued. The design of the trihemiolia – a type of light and extremely fast ship, capable of pursuing the pirate hemioliai that stormed the Hellenistic Aegean – undoubtedly had a crucial part to play in the Rhodians' anti-piracy actions, the highlight of which was the victory of Rhodes in the First Cretan War at the end of the 3rd century BCE. The analysis of the relevant historical and archaeological data attempted in this paper reveals that piracy was a decisive factor in both the establishment of Rhodes as a leading naval power in the Hellenistic Aegean and its decline.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout classical antiquity, Rhodes was an important trading center of the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, but it rose to prominence during the Hellenistic period. As discussed in detail below, the Rhodians are praised by ancient authors as “masters of the sea”, mainly due to their systematic efforts to eliminate piracy. This paper examines the relationship between the Rhodians and pirates, as Hellenistic Rhodes is an excellent case study of how the naval powers were dealing with the phenomenon of piracy. It opens with a brief discussion of the relationship between trade and piracy, as it was this relationship that determined the attitude of each naval power towards pirates. Subsequently, the various aspects of Rhodes' anti-piracy policy and the ways in which it sought to enforce this policy are examined. Finally, the conflict between the Rhodians and the Cretan pirates is examined, which had a decisive impact on both the prosperity and the decline of Hellenistic Rhodes.

TRADE AND PIRACY

The prevailing view among early and mid-20th century scholars was that piracy represented one of the most important factors damaging trade and, consequently, the economy of cities (e.g., Ormerod 1924, 113, 128, 155.

187, 233, 257–58; Rostovtzeff 1941, 1242–249; Heichelheim 1957, 91–3, 131–33). This view has been adopted by more recent scholars, arguing that the economic growth of trade in the Mediterranean area during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE was thanks to suppression of piracy by the Romans (e.g., Hopkins 1983, xviii–xix). Besides, the contrasting relationship between trade and piracy seems to be confirmed by ancient authors, such as Thucydides (1.5.1, 1.13.5) and Strabo (e.g., 3.2.5, 10.4.9).

Recent research has offered a different perspective on this previously held belief. Shipwrecks, as well as amphorae distributed in large quantities and in various places, prove that trade in the Aegean continued uninterrupted, even during periods of intense pirate activity (Parker 1992, 31–5; Davies 2001, 27–9; Gabrielsen 2013a, 149, with further bibliography). Interestingly, during the second half of the 3rd century BCE – a period of economic prosperity in the Cyclades and the flourishing of important commercial ports, such as Thasos, Delos, Kos and Rhodes itself – there was a significant increase in pirate attacks (Gabrielsen 2001, 221).

Contrary to what was generally accepted in the past, scholars now perceive trade and piracy as two closely related forms of economic activity (e.g., Gabrielsen 2001, 221; Samaras 2015, 191). Goods and people stolen by pirates gradually began to reach the markets of the Aegean and neighboring regions (Rauh 1997; 1999, 171; de Souza 1999, 22, 56, 201–2). Pirates seem to have been the main supplier of slaves, as they served various trading centers, the most famous being Delos (cf. Strabo 14.5.2). Some scholars have claimed that the pirates' main aim was the enslavement of people (e.g., Maróti 1969–1970, 70; Brulé 1978, 18, 159, 161, 183), while de Souza (1999, 60–3) later considered statements about the piratical contribution to the Hellenistic slave trade to be highly exaggerated. However, the fact that Hellenistic cities protected their citizens from being snatched and enslaved suggests the gravity and frequency of the risk (Lewis 2019, 93–9). Regardless of the actual size of the pirates' contribution to the slave trade, it is plausible that it was vital for them to find markets to sell their prey, and more than a few cities were willing to provide them with port bases and markets for their ill-gotten goods (de Souza 1999, 188).

It can therefore be concluded that trade and piracy have more in common than might have been expected. These are activities with a similar motive (i.e., the economic gain of the participants), which fulfill their purpose only when their products reach the markets to be sold. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that trade was a non-violent practice and that merchants were in direct danger from pirates, as they risked being enslaved or even dying and losing their goods if they were confronted with a pirate ship. Pirates, for their part, sought to keep maritime trade going uninterrupted and even chose to operate in new places from time to time so as not to exhaust the merchants of a single region (de Souza 1995, 187–88). Finally, for the markets it was immaterial whether the cargo came from stolen goods or not (Gabrielsen 2013a, 148–49).

As far as Rostovzeff's statement (Rostovzeff 1941, 1242–243) that the economic development of cities was harmed by piracy is concerned, it is obviously only partially true. The cities targeted and plundered by the pirates were indeed damaged, both economically and materially. But other cities, those that provided a market for piratical goods, prospered as a result. The cities that cooperated with the pirates for their economic growth were not few. In fact, piracy was a solution for the poor habitants of a region, since it was probably a conscious choice that was linked to socio-economic and political dimensions (Davies 1984, 290; Gabrielsen 2001, 221–22).

Several ancient authors confirm that it was common practice for the Hellenistic cities to recruit pirates as mercenaries, when there was a need for sea or infantry forces (e.g., Dem. 23.148–149, 162, 166–167; Strabo 10.4.10). During this period, the distinction between pirates and mercenaries is often quite blurred, as the same people could engage in both activities (Ormerod 1924, 143). The fact that the cities recruited pirates as mercenaries suggests acceptance of the practice of piracy, but the trust they placed in these people often turned out to be misplaced, since pirates did not hesitate to betray their commanders if a better economic deal was offered (Pacheco 2020, 102).

Perhaps the prime example of the use of pirates as mercenaries in the period under discussion comes from Demetrius I Poliorcetes, who cooperated with the pirate Timocles in the unsuccessful siege of Rhodes in 305–304 BCE (Diod. Sic. 20.97.5). He also recruited to his army merchant ship captains, who followed them appar-

ently to benefit from the spoils they would secure in the plundering of rich Rhodes. This example illustrates the fluid context between pirates, merchants and mercenaries. Merchants could turn into mercenaries just as easily as pirates if a profitable opportunity arose (Gabbert 1986, esp. 156; Pacheco 2020, 102).

For the Rhodian side, on the other hand, there are no reports of the use of pirates as mercenaries in their military conflicts, nor of the granting of markets or harbor bases to pirates. Even during the troubled Hellenistic times, pirates and their prey were not welcome in all commercial ports, as Rostovtzeff had argued (1941, 196; for arguments against Rostovtzeff's view, see Lewis 2019, 100–1). However, as discussed in more detail below, this did not prevent Rhodians from overlooking piracy, when it worked in their interests. It is therefore extremely interesting to study the perspective of a city economically dependent on maritime trade and how it dealt with the long-standing problem of piracy to preserve its economic vitality.

THE RHODIANS AS “MASTERS OF THE SEA”

During the Hellenistic period, Rhodes based its economic prosperity on maritime trade, especially long-distance trade. The island's most important trading partner was Egypt, “for it happened that most of their revenues were due to the merchants who sailed to Egypt, and that in general the city drew its food supply from that kingdom” (Diod. Sic. 20.81.4, trans. R.M. Geer, Cambridge, Mass., 1954). The city was provided with five harbors, which were naturally fortified thanks to the topography of the island (Gabrielsen 1997, 37–9; Filimonos-Tsopotou 2004, 46–70, with further bibliography). The Rhodians, however, did not content with this, but proceeded to build fortifications and walls to strengthen the protection of the bog and the harbors (for the impressive fortification system of Hellenistic Rhodes see Filimonos-Tsopotou 2004; Manoussou-Ntella 2016).

According to several ancient authors, the Rhodians constantly tried to suppress piracy during the Hellenistic period. Among the naval power of classical antiquity, few seem to have made such intense and systematic efforts to control this phenomenon as Rhodes. Strabo praises the Rhodians for the care “with which they administered affairs of state generally, and particularly those relative to their marine” and thanks to which they became “for a long period masters of the sea” and “they put an end to piracy” (Strabo 14.2.5, trans. W. Falconer, London, 1903). Similarly, Diodorus refers that “the city of the Rhodians [...] was strong in sea power” and that “she advanced to such strength that in behalf of the Greeks she by herself undertook her war against the pirates and purged the seas of these evil-doers” (Diod. Sic. 20.82.1, trans. R.M. Geer, Cambridge, Mass., 1954). Even in the 2nd century CE, Aelius Aristides mentions with admiration the enormous booty the Rhodians had seized from the Tyrrhenian pirates and points out that they once “ruled the seas” (Aristid. Or. 24.53, trans. C.A. Behr, Leiden, 1981). In addition, thanks to Rhodes, merchant ships were often escorted by warships or with armed men on board, to ensure the safety of the crew and the cargo during the voyage (e.g., Diod. Sic. 20.82.2; Lycurg. *Leoc.* 18). But how far are these statements true? Can the Rhodians really be described as “masters of the sea” in the Hellenistic period?

There is little but significant evidence for Rhodian anti-piracy actions. In 220 BCE they drove off Demetrius of Pharos from the Cyclades, which he was plundering (Polyb. 4.19.8; see also Davies 2004). Also, in 200 BCE they acted against pirates from Chalkis raiding Attica, and in 190 BCE they protected the strait of Kephallonia from pirates, in both cases with the help of the Romans and their allies (Livy 31.22.5–7, 37.13.11–12; see also de Souza 1999, 86, 88; Gabrielsen 2001, 228, 230). The Rhodians even played an important role in the great campaign against piracy with the measures of the “*Lex de provinciis praetoriis*”. This law appears to date from around 100 BCE and survives in two versions, one found at Delphi and one from Knidos (Crawford 1996, 231–70; de Souza 1999, 108–14). Additionally, the involvement of the Rhodian navy in anti-piracy actions is further confirmed by certain inscriptions, which are discussed in more detail below.

Gabrielsen rightly argues that these are just a few examples of the great effort of the Rhodians to protect the seas from pirates, as the inscriptions record actions against piracy as a common phenomenon. Furthermore, in the peace treaty between Rhodes and the Cretan city of Hierapytna about the end of the 3rd century BCE, the former show a keen interest in pirates and those accepting them in their ports (see in more detail below, “Rhodes and the Cretan pirates”). Finally, by the last quarter of the 3rd century BCE Rhodes could boast of both the resilience of its maritime infrastructure and the good use of it (Gabrielsen 2001, 229). It is indicative that in that period Rhodes had managed to control many offshore naval bases from present-day Kastellorizo to Antikythera (ancient Aigilia) and from eastern Crete to as far away as Delos (Gabrielsen 1997, 41–2).

The Rhodian navy included ships distinguished for their speed and agility, the *phylakidai nees* (φυλακίδαι νῆες), which means *guardships* in ancient Greek (Diod. Sic. 20.93.2; see also Gabrielsen 1997, 108–9; 2013b, 74). The name of these ships clearly refers to their use, as they were designed in such a way as to provide protection against raiders. Rhodian *phylakidai* were mainly intended for special missions, perhaps against pirate attacks, even giving them this name in order to advertise their effectiveness (Gabrielsen 2001, 230).

The use of *phylakidai* is revealed by a series of inscriptions referring to this type of ship. By way of example, the inscription IG XI.4 596 from Delos, dating after 250 BCE, mentions that a Rhodian navarch and his three trierarchs received honors for ensuring “the protection [φυλακῆς] of the islands and the safety [σωτηρίαι] of the Greeks”, presumably against pirates (Holleaux 1907, 359 n. 4; de Souza 1999, 81; Gabrielsen 2001, 230; Constantakopoulou 2017, 150–51). In another Delian inscription, of the early 2nd century BCE, the Rhodian navarch Epikrates is honored for “the safety [ἀσφαλείας] of the shipping trade and the protection [φυλακῆς] of the islands”, as well as for the fact that he took care to issue a regulation that no one of his crews should use Delos as a naval base (ὀρμηθῶσιν) in their piratical raids (πειρατεύοντες) against enemy (IG XI.4 751; de Souza 1999, 87–8; Gabrielsen 2001, 230–31; Constantakopoulou 2017, 151). The same navarch also participated in the chase of pirates off Kephallonia in 190 BCE, which has already been mentioned (Livy 37.13.11–12). In general, the Delian inscription corpus includes several cases attesting to the protection provided to the island by the Rhodians (e.g., IG XI.4 1133 [ca. 300–250 BCE], 1135 [mid-3rd century BCE] and 752–753 [beginning of the 2nd century BCE]).

However, beyond the protection they offered, the Rhodians also acted as a means of securing trade relations and administering justice among merchants. In 220 BCE, Rhodes declared war against Byzantion, because the Aegean merchants had turned to them for help, as Polybius recounts:

“When general inconvenience and loss of profit was caused by the Byzantines levying duties on exports from the Pontus, all the traders were aggrieved and brought their complaint before the Rhodians who were considered the supreme authority in maritime matters” (Polyb. 4.47.1, trans. W.R. Paton, London and New York, 1922; see also de Souza 1999, 49–50; Gabrielsen 2001, 231).

It is therefore clear that, during the Hellenistic period, Rhodes was a dominant naval force. With their navy the Rhodians chased pirates, protected the islands and merchant ships, while Aegean trading communities facing serious problems turned to them for help. However, to complete the picture of the Rhodians as “masters of the sea”, three further comments need to be made: firstly, for Rhodian protection and help, the island’s allies often paid exorbitant sums in return, significantly boosting the economy and, by extension, the naval power of Rhodes (Gabrielsen 2001, 233–35). Secondly, the effort to suppress pirate activity was not generalized and unconditional, but depended on the political and economic interests of Rhodes (Pacheco 2020, 101). For example, as Strabo comments (14.5.2), the Rhodians did not intervene when Cilician pirates were harassing the Seleucids in the eastern Mediterranean, as they were themselves hostile to this dynasty. Thirdly, when necessary, the Rhodians themselves carried out attacks and raids against merchant ships, producing maritime violence for their own benefit (e.g., Diod. Sic. 20.93.2–5).

THE RHODIAN NAVY

It is obvious that the navy of Rhodes played a key role in the island's effort to eliminate piracy. Even if the claim that the Rhodian navy “was particularly designed as an antipirate force” (Berthold 1984, 98) seems exaggerated, there is some direct evidence for its action against the pirates. Diodorus mentions a Rhodian law according to which “the bodies of those who fell in the war should be given public burial”, while there was also a provision for support for the families of the dead at public cost (Diod. Sic. 20.84.3, trans. R.M. Geer, Cambridge, Mass., 1954). This custom is attested by a funerary inscription found on the island that honors three brothers who lost their lives fighting for the Rhodian navy:

[ἄνδρας τ]οῦσδ' ἀγαθοὺς κεύθει
[τόδε χώ]μα θανόντας.
[. Τ]ιμακράτευσ πρωιρατεύων
[εἰς Αἰγι]λίαν ἀγωνιζόμενος ποτὶ
[λαῖστας] ἐτελεύτασε.
[.]ης Τιμακράτευσ πλέων ἐν ταῖ
[ναυαρχίδ]ι ἐν τοῖς παρακαθημένοις ἀγω-
[νιζόμενος] ποτὶ Τυρρανοὺς ἐτελεύτασε.
[Πολέμαρχο]ς Τιμακράτευσ συνταγματάρ-
[χος ταχθεὶς] ποτὶ τοὺς λαῖστας ἀγωνιζό-
[μενος ἐτελε]ύτασε.
[Κα]σαρεῖς. (Segre 1932, 457–61 [= Syll.³ 1225])

The most probably date for this inscription is about the middle of the 3rd century BCE (Sekunda 2014; see also Gabrielsen 2001, 229, n. 43). For the third brother, Polemarchos, it is clearly mentioned that he died fighting against the pirates (τοὺς λαῖστας), but most scholars accept that the other two brothers were killed in a similar way (e.g., Ormerod 1924, 130 n. 3; de Souza 1999, 50–1). The Tyrrhenians mentioned in relation to the two brothers may represent any pirates of the Adriatic Sea or the Italian peninsula (on the Tyrrhenian pirates see Bakhuizen 1988; Bresson 2007; Fritzilas, this volume). Polemarchos is also mentioned in another inscription from the island, which is earlier, dating back to the beginning of the 3rd century BCE (Jacopi 1932, 169–70). In this second inscription, he is honored for his participation in an attack on Aigilia (present-day Antikythera), once more against pirates (Brulé 1978, 31; de Souza 1999, 51; Bresson 2016, 162–63; see also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis, this volume).

Another inscription offering valuable information about the actions of the Rhodian navy against the pirates comes from an impressive monument discovered on the acropolis of Lindos: a marble prow of a warship, on which a statue (probably Nike) once stood (Blinkenberg 1938, 30–7; 1941, 301–13 no. 88; Filimonos-Tsopotou 2013, 269–70; Gabrielsen 2013c, 69–71; Figs. 1–2). The preserved part of the inscription of this monument, which was dated between 265 and 260 BCE based on the letter forms and prosopographical data (Blinkenberg 1941, 308; see also Gabrielsen 2013c, 70 n. 24), testifies that it was dedicated to Lindos' principal deity, Athena Lindia, by the commanders and crews of a squadron of *trihemioliai* as a tithe (ἀπαρχάν) from the booty (λαφύρων) they had captured during a successful naval expedition. Blinkenberg argued that this expedition was against Tyrrhenian pirates, a view accepted by most scholars (e.g., Filimonos-Tsopotou 2013, 269; Gabrielsen 2013c, 71–2; contra Wiemer 2002, 134).

This inscribed monument raises many interesting issues for discussion, but the present paper is limited to commenting on two specific aspects. Firstly, in this case the booty resulting from the successful expedition against the Tyrrhenians did not become state property, but was claimed by the crews, which reveals that at least in Hellenistic Rhodes private anti-pirate campaigns could be organized and conducted (Gabrielsen 2013c, 71–2). Secondly, considering the cost of this impressive monument and the fact that it was dedicated as a tithe of the booty, it becomes clear that these campaigns could yield a very substantial profit (Wiemer 2002, 134), which explains the private interest in them. Moreover, of particular importance is that the expedition against the Tyrrhenians was carried out with *trihemioliai*, a ship type developed by the Rhodians specifically for their anti-pirate operations.



Fig. 1. The marble monument in the form of a warship prow on the acropolis of Lindos, Rhodes (Gabrielsen 2013c, fig. 3).



Fig. 2. The inscription on the monument of Figure 1 (Gabrielsen 2013c, fig. 4).

The *trihemiolia* was added to the powerful Rhodian navy at the end of the 4th century BCE and was later adopted by Athens and Ptolemaic Egypt (Robert 1944, 11–2; Casson 1958, 16–7; Morrison 1980, 122; see also Nakas, this volume, with further bibliography). It was developed during the peak of the Rhodian navy and its use ceased after 42 BCE, when the Roman general Cassius Longinus stripped the island of its fleet. The Rhodians, however, were so attached to this ship type that they retained it for more than a century, using it mainly on ritual occasions (Blinkenberg 1938, 49–50; Casson 1958, 17–8).

The earliest mention of *trihemioliai* is Diodorus' description of the famous siege of Rhodes by Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 305–304 BCE:



Fig. 3. The relief prow below the entrance to the acropolis of Lindos, Rhodes (photo by [Manfred Werner](#)).

“Menedemus, who commanded three light undecked ships [*τριημιολίων*], sailed to Patara in Lycia; and finding at anchor there a ship whose crew was on shore, he set the hull on fire; and he took many of the freighters that were carrying provisions to the army and dispatched them to Rhodes” (Diod. Sic. 20.93.3, trans. R.M. Geer, Cambridge, Mass., 1954).

Furthermore, in the battle of Chios in 201 BCE, the existence of *trihemioliai* (*τριημιολίαι*) in the allied fleets of Attalus and Rhodes, which defeated the fleet of Philip V of Macedonia, is mentioned by Polybius (16.2.10). Apart from the references of the ancient writers, there is a series of inscriptions attesting to the Rhodian origin of the *trihemiolia* (for an overview of this inscription corpus see Blinkenberg 1938, 14–19).

But why did the Rhodians design the *trihemiolia* and incorporate it in their fleet? During the 4th century BCE, pirate *hemioliai* were very successful, as they were light and extremely fast, making the traditional ships of the Greek fleets up to that time unsuitable for their pursuit (for *hemioliai* see Casson 1958, 14–16; Morrison 1980, 121–24; Nakas, this volume, with further bibliography). It is illustrative that Theophrastus, who lived at that time, mentions ships as a synonym for the pirate threat (Theophr. *Char.* 25.2). The Rhodians sought a solution to the difficulty of pursuing pirate *hemioliai* by adapting to the traditional model of the trireme elements of the *hemiolia* (Casson 1958, 17). The result was the *trihemiolia*, a ship type heavier and faster than the *hemiolia*, suitable for both pursuit and combat.

The *trihemiolia* was used exclusively as part of the organized navy and not as a pirate ship (Casson 1958, 16, n. 16). Its effectiveness in the pursuit of pirate ships contributed significantly to the establishment of the reputation of the Rhodians as “masters of the sea”. So strong is the connection between the Rhodian navy and the *trihemioliai*, that the ships both in the aforementioned monument of 265–250 BCE, dedicated to Athena Lindia, and in other well-known monuments (e.g., the relief prow below the entrance to the acropolis of Lindos and the famous Nike of Samothrace; Figs. 3–4) were long considered to be *trihemioliai* (e.g., Blinkenberg 1938, 22–40; Morrison 1980, 124–25; Rice 1996, 214; Mark 1998, 157–58), a view now seriously disputed (Casson 1971, 102–3; Gabrielsen 1997, 88–9; Stewart 2016, 404, 407–8; Clinton et al. 2020, 565–67; Palagia 2021, 155).



Fig. 4. The Nike of Samothrace, Louvre Museum, Paris (photo by [Shonagon](#)).

RHODES AND THE CRETAN PIRATES

As already mentioned, during the Hellenistic period Rhodes made systematic efforts to eliminate piracy. These efforts lasted until about the end of the Second Cretan War (153 BCE), which found Rhodes extremely weakened and Rome gaining the role that Rhodes had occupied until then. The primary objective of the Rhodians was to patrol the seas and ensure the safety of trade, as this served their economic interests (Brulé 1978, 29–30). In the Rhodians' anti-piracy operations, the main targets seem to have been the Cretans, who had developed intense pirate activity, especially towards the end of the 3rd century BCE, when Philip V of Macedonia encouraged this activity in order to harm Rhodes economically and militarily, aiming to make his kingdom the leading Aegean power (for the Cretan piracy see Brulé 1978; de Souza 1999, esp. 80–4; Perlman 1999).

As a result of the increasing Cretan piracy and its impact on the commercial activities and economic interests of Rhodes and its allies, the First Cretan War broke out in 206/5 BCE (for a brief outline of this war see de Souza 1999, 80–4; Perlman 1999, 134–37, and in more detail Brulé 1978, 29–56). The Rhodians' main opponents were Gortyn, Hierapytna and Eleutherna. The treaty between Rhodes and Hierapytna (*IC* III iii 3), which is preserved in full and its dating has been controversial (see Dmitriev 2011, 433–34), reveals that the war ended with Rhodes prevailing.

According to the treaty's terms, Rhodes could recruit Cretans as mercenaries, use Hierapytna as a military and naval base and, in the event of an attack against the island, demand that the Hierapytnians assist in its defense (de Souza 1999, 82–3; Perlman 1999, 136). On the other hand, the Rhodians promised that they would help with all their forces if Hierapytna was attacked. It is clear that, despite the apparent alliance, the Cretan city was in a subordinate position, conceding part of its independence to Rhodes. Nevertheless, although Rhodian ships could enter the ports of Hierapytna at any time, there is no evidence suggesting the permanent presence of a Rhodian garrison in the city.

Furthermore, according to the treaty, Hierapytna was obliged to assist Rhodes in its fight against the pirates (Brulé 1978, 52–4; de Souza 1999, 83):

“[...] And if pirates [*λαστήρια*] establish bases in Crete and the Rhodians wage war at sea against the pirates [*λαστάς*] or those who provide shelter or assistance to them, the Hierapytnians shall take part in the operations by land and by sea with all possible strength at their own expense. The pirates [*λασται*] who are captured shall be handed over to the Rhodians together with their ships, while each of the allies shall take half of the rest (of the booty). [...] And if during a campaign which the Hierapytnians are waging with the Rhodians to destroy a pirate base [*λαιοτηρίου*], any of those who provide shelter or assistance to the pirates [*λαιστάς*] wage war on the Hierapytnians because of this campaign, the Rhodians shall come to the help of the Hierapytnians with all possible strength, and anyone who acts in this way shall be an enemy of the Rhodians” (*IC* III iii 3, lines 52–59, 80–83, translation in Austin 2006, 214–15).

These terms reveal Rhodes' anticipation of continued anti-piracy campaigns and the strong possibility that these campaigns would be conducted against Cretan pirates. For that reason, although in a superior position, Rhodes did not order the disarmament of the Hierapytna fleet, as this fleet could assist them in their “war at sea against the pirates”.

The Rhodians' victory in the First Cretan War meant the regaining of their power in the Aegean, which is reflected in the revival of the Islander's League (*κοινὸν τῶν νησιωτῶν*) (otherwise known as the Nesiotic League), a league “headquartered at Tenos and serving as the instrument of Rhodian hegemony” (Reger 1994, 35; for the Second Islanders' League see also Étienne 1990, 101–24; Sheedy 1996; Gabrielsen 1997, 56–63). During the first third of the 1st century BCE, Rhodes continued its efforts to eliminate piracy, and de Souza (1999, 84) is probably right in arguing that “the reputation of the Rhodians as the suppressors of piracy for the common good, which Diodorus mentions dates to this period (Diod. Sic. 20.81.3)”.

The hegemony of Rhodes in the Aegean lasted until 167 BCE, when Rome made Delos a free port and proclaimed the freedom of Lycia and Caria, severely damaging the two main poles of the Rhodian economy (Diod. Sic. 31.43.1–45.1; Polyb. 30.31.4–12; see also de Souza 1999, 90–1). The gradual weakening of Rhodes allowed the Cretan pirates to intensify their activities. Gabrielsen (1997, 55–6) is probably right in arguing that the revival of Cretan piracy was not the real principal motive for the Second Cretan War (155–153 BCE), but it certainly had a significant impact (Brulé 1978, 63–4; Berthold 1984, 223).

The Second Cretan War was a conflict that pitted the Cretan cities against Rhodes once more. Not much is known about this war; however, it is worth mentioning that Polybius referring to the Rhodian general

Aristocrates comments that the Rhodians “were deceived in their hopes” (Polyb. 33.4.3, trans. W.R. Paton, Cambridge, Mass., 1968), which suggests that Rhodes suffered a major naval defeat (for other incidents possibly connected with the Second Cretan War see Ager 1996, 394; Gabrielsen 1997, 55–6). The war ended with the intervention of Rome and on humiliating terms for Rhodes, which were relegated from a great naval power into a dependent ally of Rome (Brulé 1978, 57–66; de Souza 1999, 90–1).

CONCLUSION

The case of Hellenistic Rhodes is representative of the way a major naval power manages the phenomenon of piracy. Such a power is obliged to pursue pirates as they challenge its authority and severely damage its economic interests. Nevertheless, despite the systematic effort of the Rhodians to eliminate piracy in the Aegean, and even though some ancient written sources claim that this effort was successful, the deep-rooted problem of piracy remained a persistent and adaptive threat beyond full eradication. Pirates always found ways to continue their activities and sell loot. Perhaps this is due to the nature of piracy, since both pirate bases and the areas where pirates operated could be easily changed. Furthermore, there have been recorded cases in which a great naval power, such as Rhodes, chose not to intervene to put an end to the activities of certain pirates, as they served its interests.

The Rhodians could not only ignore or even encourage pirate activity, but often produced maritime violence themselves, as they attacked the merchant ships of their rivals. In general, the anti-piracy policy of Rhodes, like that of the naval power of any period, seems to have been determined primarily by its political and economic interests. It should not be forgotten that, in pursuing the pirates, the Rhodians were not only defending the merchant ships of the island and their allies. The protection and security offered by the famous Rhodian navy and especially by their beloved *trihemioliai* provided them with considerable revenues. Overall, the analysis of the historical and archaeological data on the relationship between Rhodes and the pirates during the Hellenistic period reveals that piracy was an essential factor in both the establishment of Rhodes as a leading naval power in the Aegean and its decline from this role.



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The Archaeological Footprint of the Cilician Pirates

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we summarize the results of the Rough Cilicia Archaeological Survey Project as they pertain to piracy, by introducing two fresh avenues of investigation: a covert spaces analysis of potential pirate bases in the region and a presentation of the evidence demonstrating a link between the pirate settlements on the coast and the Isaurian tribal elements of the Taurus hinterland. GIS analysis of the coastal terrain reveals the potential for pirate infestation based on the visibility of moorages, lines of sight at sea and the ability to target offshore shipping. It considers the problem from a topographical perspective and illuminates the extent to which the maritime landscape of the Rough Cilicia was suitable to piracy. The second avenue attempts to demonstrate how the evidence of an Isaurian cultural horizon in coastal Rough Cilicia reveals a conjuncture between the warlords of the hinterland and the pirates on the coast. Much like the GIS analysis of pirate base visibility, the highland connection can be demonstrated both through material assemblages and GIS least-cost-path analysis.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE CILICIAN PIRATES

The Cilician pirates emerged from the dynastic disputes of various pretenders to the Seleucid throne ca. 146–138 BCE, having been organized by Diodotus Tryphon, a former Seleucid military officer from Apamea, during his conflicts with Demetrius II and Antiochus VII Sidetes. Before his death in 138 BCE, Tryphon managed to install his renegade naval forces at a number of impregnable fortresses along the eastern Mediterranean corridor – most particularly at Coracesium (*Korakesion*; Fig. 1) in western Rough Cilicia (*Cilicia Tracheia* or *Aspera*). In the aftermath of Tryphon, these naval elements continued to launch naval assaults on Syria and Cilicia, apparently acting of their own volition. In a short time, a number of independent warlords (*tyrannoi*, *strategoï*, *archipiratae*) carved out small domains for themselves, particularly along the remote mountainous coast of western Cilicia. At first, their marauding activities were tolerated by other powers of the region – the Republic of Rhodes, the Attalid kings of Pergamum, the Ptolemies of Egypt and Cyprus, and Roman commercial elements active in the Aegean – since they not only directed the thrust of their assaults against Seleucid assets, but they also benefited the slave-economy of the region by generating sales of kidnapped prisoners. Their commerce became welcome at harbors such as Aegean Delos, Lycian Phaselis and Pamphylian Side. However, the pirates soon grew increasingly indiscriminate and predatory in their selection of prizes. A sufficient quantity of evidence indicates that non-Seleucid shipping likewise fell prey to their ambushes.



Fig. 1. The pirate base (promontory) at Coracesium: (1) View of the promontory from Hamaxia; (2) GIS-model of the Hellenistic fortifications at Coracesium (based on Lloyd and Rice 1958, 10–38); (3) Courses of Hellenistic quarry-faced ashlar blocks at the Er Kapı on the promontory; (4) View of the location of the ancient harbor at Alanya, with Selcuk era ship sheds at upper right.

By 102 BCE, as Roman influence over the Mediterranean grew, the indiscriminate attacks of the Cilician pirates outweighed the benefits of their trade. This provoked the Romans to act against them through a combined program of diplomatic pressure, legal prohibition and military force. These measures proved minimally effective. The pirates survived the naval assault of the proconsul Marcus Antonius Orator, who apparently campaigned as far as Side, and soon gained new-found support from Rome's greatest adversary in the region, King Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus. By aligning themselves with Mithridates at the outset of his war against Rome (88–84 BCE), the pirates greatly enhanced their naval capacities and expanded their sway to new territories. For example, they participated in the king's assaults on Delos, Rhodes and Lycia and harassed the Roman proquaestor Lucius Licinius Lucullus, as he sailed from Crete to Egypt to recruit naval forces for his commander, Lucius Cornelius Sulla. Unwisely, Sulla resolved to leave these assaults unpunished. His pressing need to return to Italy to defeat his internal adversaries compelled him to make an imperfect peace with Mithridates, a peace that left the pirates not only unscathed, but in a better position than before.

Pirate realms now dominated the entire gulf of Pamphylia (Fig. 2). By 78 BCE, a pirate chief named Zenicetes appears to have carved out an independent territory for himself in eastern Lycia, centered in a castle that dominated the harbors of Olympos, Corycus and Phaselis. Further east, other pirate chiefs constructed impregnable fortresses at Coracesium and the Cragus mountain allegedly equipped with well stocked harbors, warehouses, ship sheds, skilled artisans and laborers chained to their stations. Cities along the Pamphylian coast appear to have cooperated fully.

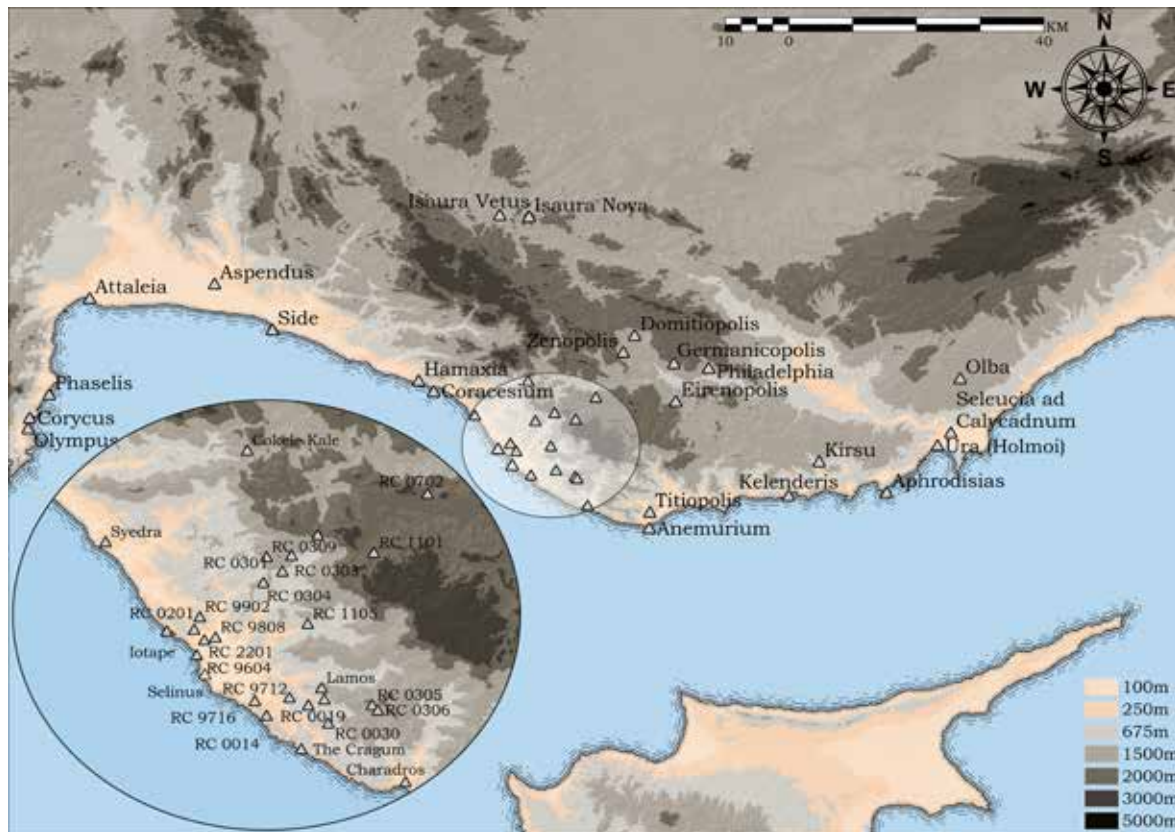


Fig. 2. The major settlements in Rough Cilicia and accompanying sites identified during the RCSP (map by A. Dawson).

From this point onward, the sources describe the pirate menace in highly sensational terms. According to authors such as Strabo (14.3.3), Plutarch (*Pomp.* 24.4, 28.2), Appian (*Mith.* 14.93, 14.96) and Cassius Dio (36.21.1), the pirates organized themselves into fleets that eventually wielded a combined armament of several hundred warships and 30,000 combatants. Operating from more than a hundred fortresses, castles and hidden coves, the pirates engaged in widespread depredations throughout the Mediterranean. Allegedly they stormed more than four hundred cities and pillaged as many as twelve sanctuaries of the Greek world. They also roved the western Mediterranean, aiding and abetting Sulla's recalcitrant enemy, Quintus Sertorius, in Spain and marauding commerce in and around Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. Cicero (*Verr.* 2.4.21) claims that the pirates cruised an annual "pirate round" between Phaselis and Dianium, Sertorius' base in Spain.

Cognizant of the seriousness of this threat, the Romans dispatched several promagistrates against them. The most successful prior to Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus was unquestionably Publius Servilius Vatia Isauricus (cos. 79 BCE), who during a three-year campaign stormed the pirate empire of Zenicetes and restored Roman rule in Pamphylia (Ormerod 1922, 25–56). He then led his forces over the Taurus Mountains into the Isaurian hinterland, to sack the stronghold of Isaura Vetus and to compel its twin fortress Isaura Nova into submission. The reasons given for this overland campaign remain unsatisfying, particularly since Isauricus failed to assault the pirate bases of Rough Cilicia, Coracesium and the Cragus. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of his campaign and the prospect of further Roman incursions appears to have convinced the pirates to refocus their raids toward the western Mediterranean, hoping in this manner to draw Roman attention as far from their hideouts as possible. As a component of this strategy, they established close diplomatic relations with Mithridates and Sertorius, an arrangement culminating in the "Unholy Alliance" that converged on Rome from all points of the Mediterranean in 75–74 BCE. Piratical assaults on Italy proper were highlighted by inland raids and scorched earth campaigns in southern Italy, firings of fleets (military and commercial) in Ostia and Caieta, and by a series of sensational kidnappings of Roman dignitaries and very important persons (Rauh 1997, 267).

Roman counter offensives remained desultory until 67 BCE, when the Roman popular assembly commissioned a proven young general, Cnaeus Pompeius Magnus, with an extraordinary command to eradicate the pirates once and for all. With some twenty-four legates, 270 ships and the authority to draw upon a potential complement of 120,000 infantry, 4000 cavalry and 8000 talents of revenue, Pompeius swept the Mediterranean from west to east in a three-month campaign, cornering the last holdouts in their bases in Cilicia and defeating them, ultimately, in the waters off Coracesium (Broughton 1952, 146; de Souza 1999, 166–72). Through lenient terms, Pompeius was able to persuade the majority of the pirates to surrender, and after dismantling the walls of the dreaded pirate bases, he resettled his former adversaries as colonists in Cilicia Pedia and elsewhere (Plut. *Pomp.* 28.1–4). With that, Mediterranean piracy subsided for at least a generation, or until Pompeius’ son, Sextus Pompeius, renewed the pirate wars in his rivalry with the triumvirs, Antony, Octavian and Lepidus. But that is another story. With Pompeius’ settlement of the Cilician pirates in 67 BCE, their menace largely subsided.

The above summary is compiled from ancient literary testimony, much of which tends to address the Cilician pirate menace with a considerable degree of hyperbole. It is worth noting, however, that surviving public records likewise acknowledge the gravity of the pirate menace. For example, the *SC de piratiis* of 102 BCE, the preserved texts for which survived at Delphi and Knidos, records the Roman Senate’s decision to declare the waters of Cilicia a *provincia*, that is a sphere of military influence where Roman forces intended to engage the pirates, as well as the expectation that neighboring states would cooperate fully (Hassall et al. 1974; de Souza 1999, 108–15). Votive offerings, oracular responses and civic decrees recorded at Delos, Klaros, Epidauros and Megara similarly attest to the menace of piracy (*IG IV.2*² 750; Sokolowski 1968; Rauh 2003, 64). The French excavations at Delos have demonstrated that this once affluent trading community underwent irreversible decline through repeated pirate assaults, including a devastating raid in 69 BCE (Rauh 1993, 68). Publius Servilius Vatia’s victory over the pirates is not only preserved in the *Fasti Triumphales* at Rome, but his sack of Isaura Vetus is confirmed by the discovery of his ritual *evocatio* of the city’s patron deity, inscribed in Latin on a block found in Bozkır, Turkey (Strabo 12.6.2; Hall 1973). Several sources, meanwhile, claim to quote directly from preserved records of Pompeius’ triumph in 61 BCE. According to Pliny the Elder, in the “senatus consultum” that officially sanctioned Pompeius’ triumph, the Senate proclaimed that he had “rescued the sea-coast from pirates and restored to the Roman People the command of the sea” (*HN* 7.98, trans. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass., 1942; cf. 37.6.12–13; Palmer 1990, 3). As stated by Plutarch, bronze tablets borne at the head of Pompeius’ triumphal procession displayed a list of the adversaries he conquered, including “all the power of the pirates by sea and land which had been overthrown” (Plut. *Pomp.* 45.1–3, trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1917; cf. Diod. Sic. 40.4.1; Vogel-Wiedemann 1985). Referring to the same tablets, Appian adds Pompeius’ claim to have captured some 800 warships with brazen beaks (*Mith.* 17.117). These records lend considerable credence to the argument that the Roman hierarchy viewed the Cilician pirate threat and the events culminating in its defeat as significant milestones.

The significance, the breadth and the scale of the pirate wars remains contradicted, nonetheless, by the seeming absence of an archaeological footprint in Rough Cilicia. Participants in the Rough Cilicia Archaeological Survey Project (RCSP), conducted between 1996 and 2011 in the region of the pirate bases of Coracesium and the Cragus, have addressed this matter in several publications (e.g., Rauh 1997; 2003, 169–202; 2019, 45–50; Rauh et al. 2000; 2013). As we will demonstrate below, the evidence for piracy in this region is meager and all but indistinguishable from an otherwise nondescript pattern of Hellenistic settlement along this coast. Scholars legitimately question the existence of pirate enclaves along this shore (de Souza 1999, 128–30, 136–41; 2013; Tomaschitz 2013, 57–8). Philip de Souza (2013, esp. 46–53) challenges the categorization of indigenous navies as pirates altogether, arguing that dominant maritime powers, such as Rhodes or Rome, were all too inclined to brand as pirates any lesser polity that attempted to control its neighboring sea lanes. De Souza’s argument has the advantage of associating the pirate enclaves on the coast with local populations, including those of the Taurus interior. As we noted above, not only did Publius Servilius Isauricus extend his campaign to the Isaurian interior, but Plutarch and Appian recount that the “mountain Cilicians” (ὄρειοι Κίλικες) likewise opposed Pompeius, only to see their tyrants paraded in his triumph (Plut. *Pomp.* 45.2–4; App. *Mith.* 14.96; cf.

Strabo 14.5.10). More recently, Rauh (2019, 49) has conceded that piracy of this magnitude could only have occurred through collaboration between indigenous Cilician populations and renegade maritime elements. In many respects, the Cilician pirate menace represented a Mediterranean-wide response to rising political instability provoked by the severity of Roman imperialism. Especially during the wars against Mithridates VI, the harshness of Roman exactions and reprisals reportedly drove provincial elites into the fold of the pirates (Plut. *Pomp.* 24.2; App. *Mith.* 14.92; Cass. Dio 36.20.2–4). In essence, disturbances catalyzed by Roman expansion created both a power vacuum for piracy to thrive in and a recruiting ground for disaffected warriors, sailors, profiteers and sympathizers.

These musings return us to the question of ancient historical hyperbole. Conceivably, the ancient sources interpreted as a sustained menace something resembling a series of sporadic, geographically shifting outbreaks of piracy over a seventy-year interval. We have attempted to argue, for example, that the original core region of the Cilician pirate phenomenon was possibly Pamphylia and eastern Lycia (Rauh et al. 2000, 152). Several sources draw attention to the fact that urban centers, like Phaselis, Attaleia, Side and Aspendos, openly colluded with pirates, such as Zenicetes, prior to their suppression by Publius Servilius Isauricus (*CIL* I² 2662; Cic. *Leg. agr.* 1.5; *Verr.* 2.1.53). With the suppression of this Lycian-Pamphylian-Isaurian network in 75 BCE, retreating pirate elements conceivably relocated eastward to bases at Coracesium and the Cragus. Christoph Konrad (1994, 217) has proposed a similar pattern of relocation in the western Mediterranean, where, following the demise of Quintus Sertorius in 72 BCE, renegade supporters coalesced at Sertorius' pirate base in Dianium before abandoning the Spanish peninsula altogether for Sicily. As Konrad notes, these holdouts would have included warriors, merchants, pirates and citizens that were, for whatever reason, incapable of making peace with Rome. As such, the pirate menace may have posed not so much a through line of violence, as it did an undulating series of crises, with contingents repeatedly coalescing, relocating, and recombining, only to reemerge with renewed vigor. A better perspective requires, accordingly, a balance between what is recorded with what seems geographically feasible, chronologically coherent, and archaeologically demonstrable. In this respect, our summary highlights several issues that return us to the relationship between maritime topography and social dissidence.

SURVEY EVIDENCE IN WESTERN ROUGH CILICIA

What the evidence of the RCSP survey has revealed is that a Hellenistic horizon of ceramic remains is consistent throughout the region, but the numbers are minimal in quantity and indicate a shallow pattern of small, dispersed settlements. As the published context ceramics of the survey indicate (Autret et al. 2019), counts of Hellenistic ceramics in the survey region were limited (6%, or 339 out of some 5418 dated sherds). It is not so much their numbers as it is their distribution that seems significant. Hellenistic ceramics were encountered in every region that has been investigated, including the coastal sites and ridges investigated in 1996–1999, the Adanda Canyon in the *mesogeia* investigated in 2000–2003 and the highland sites in the upper Bickici river basin investigated in 2003–2011. One highland site, Sugözü Yayla (RC 1102), seems particularly noteworthy, because it sits at 1600 m elevation, overlooking the pass that connects the Bickici River on the coast to the southern branch of the Göksu or Calycadnus River on the interior. Moreover, Hellenistic ceramics were encountered at every categorized locus, regardless of scale, from the large urban sites such as Iotape and Selinus, to village scale settlements, to isolated farmsteads, kiln sites and press complexes, to random rural survey units. As we have noted previously, the presence of pre-Roman ceramics at Iotape and Antiochia ad Cragum (Fig. 3) seems particularly important, because both communities were established in the mid-1st century CE by the Roman client king Antiochus IV of Commagene. What the pre-Roman pottery indicates, therefore, is that local settlements preceded these foundations, settlements that may possibly have served as pirate bases.

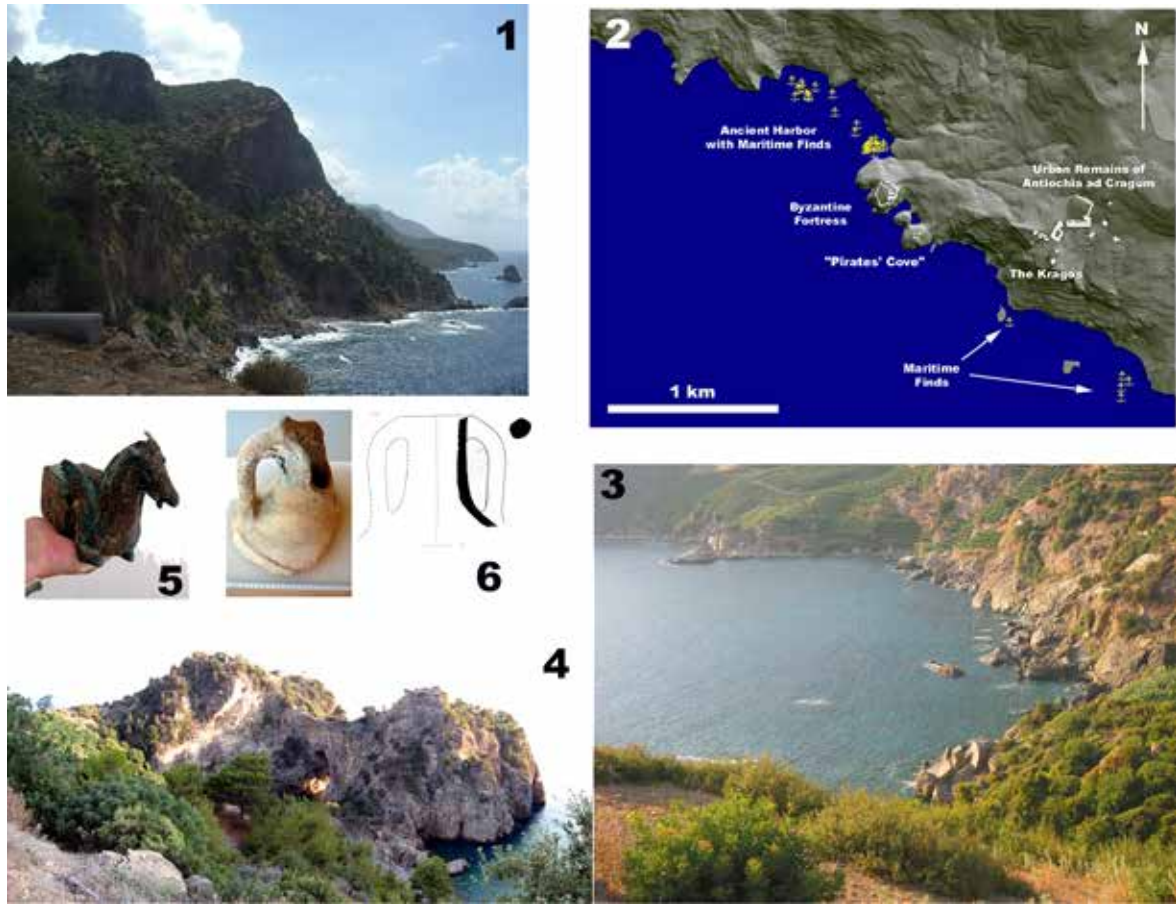


Fig. 3. The remains at Antiochia ad Cragum ("the Cragus"): (1) View of the acropolis; (2) GIS-model of the site; (3) View of the harbor area where underwater remains were found; (4) View of the "pirates' cove"; (5) Pegasus ship's ornament found in the harbor area; (6) Lamboglia 2 amphora found in the harbor area.

Any attempt to contextualize these remains with the era of the pirates is easily frustrated, however, by the limited value of the data itself. Take, for example, our occasional finds of Italian transport amphoras that date precisely to the early 1st century BCE and were found in large quantities at the Roman trading community at Delos, where the pirates supposedly fenced their stolen prisoners (Strabo 14.5.2; Rauh 2003, 60). The upper portion of a Lamboglia 2 amphora from Italy was recovered by the RCSP dive team in the harbor of Antiochia ad Cragum in 2003 and fragments of the same form were found at a fortified rural site in the Adanda Canyon, Tomak Asarı (RC 0019; Rauh et al. 2009, 272–75; Fig. 3). These finds demonstrate that the two sites were occupied at the time of the Cilician pirates. However, the question remains whether or not this is sufficient in and of itself to demonstrate the presence of pirates, particularly when it is offset by the rising numbers of Lamboglia 2 and other Italian forms of the Republican era that are emerging throughout the wider eastern Mediterranean, including examples published at the nearby Alanya, Anamur and Taşucu Archaeological Museums (Sibella 2002, fig. 10; Şenol 2009, 216; Autret et al. 2021). These finds demonstrate that Italian amphoras were far more widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean than previously understood. It is fair to ask, therefore, whether the presence of these forms indicates the transactions of pirates, or whether they are merely indicative of an eastern Mediterranean distribution pattern for Roman trading commodities?

Turning to the evidence for economic activity, the pottery recovered at the Bickici kiln site indicate that this site was utilized during the Hellenistic era. The Koan type amphora that was manufactured at this site conceivably came into production in the 1st century BCE. The freshwater caves with rich clay deposits that loom directly above the site, and timber brought down from the mountains via the river, undoubtedly attracted artisans and passing maritime shippers at that time. In the same coastal plain the RCSP survey identified an extensive press complex at nearby Kale Tepe (RC 0201), a fortified village (RC 2201) and another nearby site (RC

9605), all of which yielded Hellenistic ceramics. In other words, a cluster of small Hellenistic sites were situated at the mouths of two perennial rivers (the Delice and the Bickici) that descend precipitously from the Taurus highlands, where additional sites, such as Kenetepe (RC 0304) and Sugözü Yayla (RC 1102), likewise yielded Hellenistic remains. This will become important to the hinterland discussion that follows.

From an architectural standpoint, the evidence for Hellenistic settlement in Rough Cilicia is equally meager, the one exception being the presence of numerous Hellenistic fortification systems. Fortifications exhibiting unbonded courses of large limestone blocks (ashlar, polygonal, pseudo-isodomic) represent the earliest stone monuments of any significance throughout the region. Surviving remains range from the impressive fortresses at Hamaxia, Alanya (Coracesium), Meydancık Kale (Kirşu) and the Ovacık peninsula (Aphrodisias), to small acropolis citadels at Selinus, Kahyalar (RC 2201), Anemurium and Kelenderis, to the isolated towers at Lamos and Antiochia ad Cragum, and the roughly hewn vernacular defenses recorded at Iotape, Guda Tepe (RC 9712), Güzelce Harman Tepe (RC 9716) and Tomak Asarı (RC 0019) (Rauh et al. 2013, 66–78; Kaye and Rauh 2020, 156–62). Memorializing as they do the scarred landscape of the Macedonian Wars of Succession, these defensive remains mark the incipient phase of monumental architecture throughout Rough Cilicia. Livy (33.20.4–5) refers, for example, to the existence of “fortified places” (*castella*) at several coastal settlements that were seized by Antiochus III in 197 BCE, including Aphrodisias, Anemurium, Selinus and Coracesium. As such, the remnant fortifications at these sites predate the rise of Cilician piracy. Fortifications constructed with a “vernacular” masonry technique are more difficult to date and could be indicative of pirate activity, were it not for the possibility that they were indigenous constructions. None of this eliminates the possibility, moreover, that pirate elements simply seized and utilized preexisting defenses as they infiltrated the region. From a practical standpoint, it needs to be added that, apart from Alanya-Coracesium, none of these sites (including Antiochia ad Cragum; Figs. 1 and 3) exhibit harbor remains or topographical features capable of accommodating large, decked warships; whereas, several of the sites could easily have accommodated smaller, open hulled pirate ships that were more typically employed by pirates. In this respect, the emphasis placed on Coracesium as the center of the pirate menace in 67 BCE grows in importance, as does our awareness of the capacity of the region to harbor small clusters of pirate war craft along its intimidating coast.

COVERT SPACES OF THE PIRATE BASES

Although the material evidence for the Cilician pirates may be scant, it can be contextualized to gain a firmer understanding of the archaeology of piracy. By contemplating the *affordances* of the Cilicians, we can evaluate the use of settlements during the “pirate period” and how they differ from other sites. Devised by the ecological psychologist James J. Gibson (1977, 1979), affordance theory states that our perception to the world is not only built on the physical characteristics of a space, but that a large amount of an actor’s perception derives from the possibilities an actor can conceive for that space. In short, affordance is determined by an actor’s relation to the environment as opposed to the environment alone. For example, a tree may have a high affordance for climbing (climb-able) for a monkey, whereas it would have a low affordance for a dog. Or a knife may be “cut-with-able” for a person, but impossible to use for a creature without fingers or thumbs. By identifying what is pirate-able, it is possible to use geo-spatial analysis to reconsider the archaeological material in Rough Cilicia and understand how pirates would have made use of the landscape at the time.

Much can be gleaned of the affordances of Cilician pirates, both from ancient history and maritime ethnography. Appian (*Mith.* 14.92) mentions that Cilicians favored light swift craft, naming specifically the *myoparo* and *hemoilia* (a one-half decked ship). To this list could logically be added the *lembos*, an older Illyrian pirate vessel, which later became a mainstay of the Hellenistic navies the Cilicians would associate with. These navies would use *lemboi* for reconnaissance and small raids, which are operationally very similar to piracy. In practical terms, it appears it was common for pirates of this era to lurk behind juts in the landscape, hidden

from oncoming ships, before racing out to strike at them. In key regions associated with piracy in antiquity, affordance appears to have been collaborated by unique landscapes. Cilicia, Crete and the Balearic Islands all contain rocky jagged coastlines, ideal for hiding small fast ships.

Cilicia in particular had the ideal environment for piracy to prosper. The impoverished land was, compared to the rest of Anatolia, devoid of natural resources apart from cedar timber ideal for ship building. In addition, recent studies by Gal et al. (2023, 424), which focus on modeling sailing mobility in antiquity, suggest the straight between Cilicia and Cyprus was one of the most challenging sections of the Mediterranean to sail, making it more likely that ships would be driven off course and into the hands of pirates. Plutarch states that the main Cilician stronghold was Coracesium (*Pomp.* 28.1), whilst Appian suggests it was Cragus (*Mith.* 14.92). They further say that pirates did not wholly contain themselves to the coastline. Plutarch mentions that during Pompeius' campaign the pirates placed their families and treasures in "strong citadels near the Taurus Mountains" (*Pomp.* 28.1, trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1917). Similarly, Appian mentions Cilicia was a useful region to the pirates because of its high mountains (*Mith.* 14.92). Wandsnider and Nelson's (2015, 55–69) work demonstrates how cities in Asia Minor signaled group identity through monumental architecture broadcast throughout the landscape. This could be expanded to suggest that settlements communicated via signals to pass messages from the coast up to the mountains, and vice versa.

This grants a blueprint of how pirates in Cilicia could have operated at this time. Small swift ships hiding in inlets and behind promontories would attack unsuspected vessels struggling in difficult waters. Raiders were likely aided by agents at inland sites observing passing ships and signaling to those on the coast. They would therefore have required locations to harbor their ships, protect their goods and areas offering expansive views to survey potential targets. Despite offering expansive views, the sites would still need to be hidden from the sea. In this manner, signaling could occur undetected by passing sailors, otherwise alerting them to an attack. Therefore, we have our required affordances for Cilician piracy. Just because Coracesium and the Cragus are the only sites with sufficient harbors to store ships, does not automatically make them suitable for piracy. What seems required are sites that simultaneously offer expansive views of the sea whilst also being hidden. The best way of measuring this is through a form of visibility analysis known as *covert spaces*.

Covert spaces is a form of visibility analysis that not only maps invisibility, but also areas "that are hard to see but afford expansive views" (covert spaces) and in particular areas that "see little but are overseen" (ambush zones) (Gillings 2015, 5). This is doubly beneficial for piracy, as covert spaces would indicate the optimum location for pirate settlements, whereas ambush zones would indicate areas where ships are most likely to be attacked by pirates. A basic viewshed analysis works as a simple binary; you have a single point and a pixelized map known as a raster. Viewshed analysis shows whether a pixel is visible from your stated point (1) or not visible (0). Multiple points on the same map can be combined to show the most visible areas on that map. Here, the scores of individual pixels in every viewshed are totaled and displayed on a new raster. The pixels most commonly visible have the highest scores, whilst the least visible have the lowest. Covert spaces analysis works by creating two separate cumulative visibility rasters of the same region, one which shows how many views can be seen from a given location, *views-from* (V_f), and another which shows how many times a viewpoint was visible from the surrounding landscape, *views-to* (V_t) (Gillings 2015, 3–5). V_f and V_t rasters are then normalized to scale values, after which V_f are subtracted from V_t to create an index for covert spaces (Table 1).

V_f	V_t			
	Values	High	Medium	Low
	High	0	+	++
	Medium	-	0	+
	Low	--	-	0

Table 1. A table explaining covert spaces (recreated from Gillings 2015, 7).

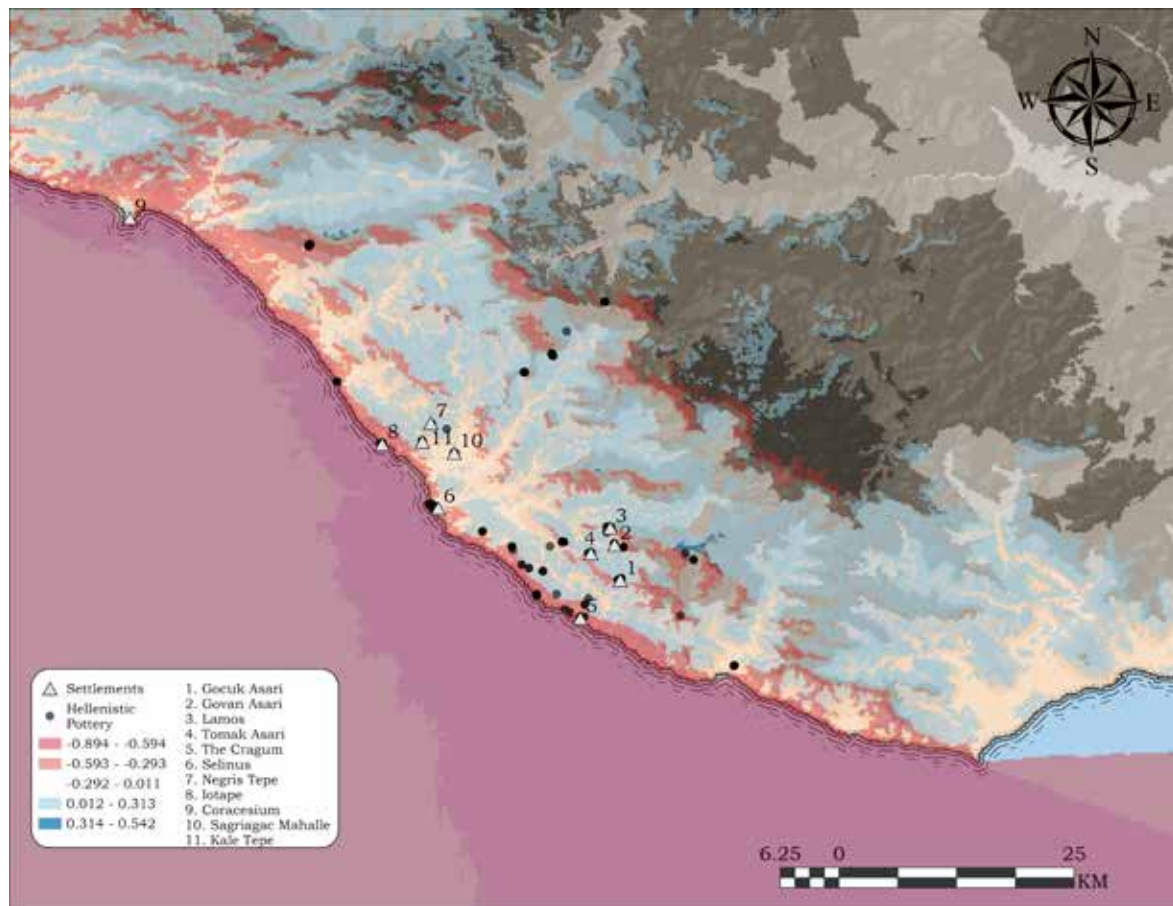


Fig. 4. Map showing the covert spaces of western Rough Cilicia (map by A. Dawson).

For the purposes of this study, V_i are points in the sea surrounding western Rough Cilicia, in this instance representing what ships could see as they sail past the coast. V_i come from sites identified in the Rough Cilicia survey projects, which could be used to survey the coast for potential targets. There were 2058 evenly spaced points that made up V_i and 1200 evenly spaced points between the Cilician coast and Taurus ridge that made up V_r . The results of this process are shown in the map in Figure 4, with RCSP sites and pottery finds also included.

Values on the map range from -0.895 and 0.542, with a negative bias. The mean score is -0.290 and the standard deviation of 0.301. This represents the vulnerability of ships sailing in these waters, as they are frequently observed but see comparatively little. Anything with a value over 0.016 can be considered covert and over 0.313 extremely covert. Likewise, a value of -0.591 is ambush-able, with -0.891 being extremely ambush-able. Here, the value of both Coracesium and the Cragus as pirate bases becomes clear. Besides the aforementioned reasons, both have useful affordances for piracy, albeit in different ways.

Coracesium's peninsula consistently scores 0.100 and over in the covert scale, placing it firmly as a covert space. With a high covertness, defensible position and deep waters on either side of its promontory able to offer ships protection from storms from multiple directions, it is easy to see how it became a central stronghold. Alternatively, the Cragus does not offer the same level of covertness as Coracesium. However, it is strategically positioned just outside of the most dangerous stretch of water in the region. The patch of sea between Anemurium and the Cragus is consistently "extremely ambush-able", with the most exposed areas that score -0.895 being located in this area.

If, as Strabo suggests (14.5.2), Cilician pirates initially prospered by attacking Seleucid ships sailing out of the eastern Mediterranean, these two sites would be ideally situated. The lack of covertness at the Cragus may

also help explain the distribution of other nearby sites. The inland sites of Lamos (RC 0000), Govan Asarı (RC 0040), Tomak Asarı (RC 0019) and Gocuk Asarı (RC 0030) are all located on, or within one pixel of, covert spaces. As is the nearby lumber camp Gürçam Karatepe (RC 0305), which is just below one of the most covert areas of the region at 0.440. These sites have the ability to monitor ships and signal to the coast with a lower risk of being spotted. A simple visibility raster also shows that all four of these sites were visible from the Cragus, suggesting the fortress would be able to receive signals not necessarily visible from the sea. When cross-referenced with ceramic finds from the RCSP we can see there was also a strong Hellenistic presence in this area, as all four sites have significant clusters of Hellenistic material. Interestingly, there is a notable blind spot in the middle of these four sites, which is not visible from the Cragus. This is devoid of both sites and Hellenistic finds. However, Hellenistic material was not isolated to covert areas. Of the 343 Hellenistic finds in Rough Cilicia, 80 are located in a covert area.

Tomak Asarı has a score of 0.072, making it a comfortably covert site with immediately adjacent pixels becoming considerably covert at 0.150. It is noted for the most diverse range of Hellenistic material, including several imported items. Tomak Asarı contains ten amphorae sherds, six of which are Lamboglia 2 type, one is Koan and the rest are unidentified. A similar pattern is visible nearby at Gocuk Asarı; while the site itself scores low on covertness, it is immediately adjacent to strong covert areas that score 0.168. Like Tomak Asarı, Gocuk Asarı displays a strong Hellenistic cluster with imported amphorae from Cyprus. Following the argument of André Tcherna (1986, 68–74), Rauh et al. (2013, 62–6) have used the discovery of Lamboglia 2 at Antiochia ad Cragum to suggest a slave-trading link between Roman merchants at Delos and the Cilicia pirates. Strabo (14.5.2) suggests a major export for Cilician pirates was, in fact, slaves, and the presence of Lamboglia 2 remains in the survey zone highlights the occurrence of commercial transactions between the inhabitants of this coast (i.e., pirates) and the Roman community at Delos. Roman writers frame the previously mentioned sack of Delos as a religious affront to highlight the impiety of pirates. Nevertheless, the French excavations at the island have demonstrated that that once affluent trading community underwent irreversible decline due to pirate assaults, including a devastating raid in 69 BCE (Rauh 1993, 68).

The Bickici river basin has the second highest concentration of Hellenistic material in the region. Like the Güney region, the sea here is quite exposed, registering often ambush-able and at times extremely ambush-able. In the Hellenistic period, there were two major settlements in the region, the one that ultimately became Iotape and Selinus. With a score of -0.692, Iotape is quite exposed and unsuited for piracy. Selinus appears better suited for piracy (0.106), although other coastal regions are more visible. As was the case with the Cragus, satellite sites around these settlements are both near areas of high covert scores and contain clusters of Hellenistic material. These include Kale Tepe (RC 0201; 0.117), Sariağac Mahalle (RC 9808; 0.016) and Nergis Tepe (RC 9902; 0.191). With 28 individual finds, the cluster at Kale Tepe is one of the largest in the Rough Cilicia. There is also evidence of importation, with three Knidian amphorae sherds and one Koan. Sariağac Mahalle also exhibited two Lamboglia 2 sherds. Binary analysis shows Iotape has no line of sight to any of the three sites mentioned here. However, Kale Tepe and Nergis Tepe occupy a small sliver of land, which has a line of sight to Selinus. There is also a trail of sites up the Bickici river, which is accompanied by a similar pattern of covert spaces, which would lend itself nicely to further connection with inland Isaurian groups.

When considering the Hellenistic occupation of Rough Cilicia in conjunction with the affordances of piracy, a pattern becomes visible. Coastal sites are often situated near vulnerable maritime areas, with visible lines of sight to smaller satellite settlements inland. These settlements tend to have high affordances for piracy, as they have the ability to monitor the sea whilst not being particularly visible from it. This would, in theory, allow for an alert of approaching ships to be passed along to waiting pirates on the coast. Archaeological assemblages from these sites suggest there was a relatively strong Hellenistic presence in this region. Regardless of the true significance of the presence of Lamboglia 2 amphora remains, the likelihood persists that inhabitants of Cilicia who were practicing piracy would be more likely to have been operating from the sites where Lamboglia 2 sherds have been found.



Fig. 5. The major tribal groups and accompanying strongholds of the Isaurian hinterland (map by A. Dawson).

THE ISAURIAN CULTURAL HORIZON ABOVE GAZIPASHA

To understand the likely connection between the pirates of coastal Rough Cilicia and the unruly tribal elements of the Taurus interior, we need to contextualize the latter. Rauh has previously referred to the Taurus ridge as an ancient “Green Line” that separated the semi-periphery of the Cilician coast from the periphery of the Isaurian hinterland (Rauh et al. 2009, 296, 299). In some respects, this serves as a useful line of demarcation. The hinterland was inhabited by dispersed populations of rural agro-pastoralists identified according to four tribal entities: the Isaurians to the northwest (directly south of Konya), the Homonadenses to the southwest (bordering Pisidia and Lycaonia), the Lalasseis directly north of western Rough Cilicia and the Cennetae slightly east (Fig. 5). The matter is confused somewhat by references to an additional tribal element known as the Ceitae. However, this term appears to apply generally to highlanders throughout eastern Rough Cilicia, in the same manner that Isaurians referred to those in the west (Hild and Hellenkemper 1990, 301; Casabonne 2004, 85; etymologically, Qedi, Kittî, Ketis, Ceitae). Two things need to be stressed at the outset: social organization among these tribes was segmentary, lineage based and dominated by tribal chieftains, and their cultural heritage was Luwian (Hopwood 1983; 1989; 1991; Shaw 1990; Lenski 1999a; 1999b; Casabonne 2004, 22–5; Grünewald 2004, 105, 119–23). One characteristic of segmentary societies is their tendency toward recombination over time. By late antiquity, the inhabitants of the interior were known generally as Isaurians, which entitles us to refer to them collectively as such. Each tribal element consisted of separate chiefdoms, which were occasionally galvanized by particularly powerful warlords into larger realms. These chieftains are referred to by several terms, such as *tyrannoi* or *basileis* in Greek and *dux* in Latin (Strabo 14.5.10; App. *Mith.* 17.117; Tac. *Ann.* 12.55). Rarely are they named as individuals; more typically, they are bunched together as warlords. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 5.94) comments that, in 52 CE, some 44 *castella* existed in the Isaurian hinterland, from which one

can infer the approximate number of local centers of gravity at that time. To a large degree, the segmented character of authority in the highlands arose from an extreme isolation imposed by the rugged topography of the Calycadnus river basin. Lines of communication were difficult, and power remained localized.

For the most part, the status of Isaurian warlords was hereditary. In this respect, we can point to the Iron Age king Appuašu of Pirindu (ca. 557 BCE), a highland warlord whose ancestral citadel, Kiršu, is identified with Meydancık Kale in the highlands above Kelenderis. In the 6th century BCE, Appuašu assembled a considerable regional hegemony that threatened Neo-Babylonian territories on the opposite Syrian coast, prompting a military response from king Neriglissar in 557 BCE. Despite his defeat, Appuašu's family remained influential, with a likely descendant being Epyaxa, the wife of the Persian satrap Syennesis of Tarsus, in 401 BCE (Casabonne 2004, 148). Another dynasty, the Teucid priest kings of Olba, dominated eastern Rough Cilicia as client kings to the Seleucids, at one point claiming authority over the *koinon* of the Lasseis and Cennetae (Syme 1986, 16; Durugönül 1998, 85–9). However, according to Strabo, their ascendancy was overturned by unruly tyrants at the time of the pirates (Strabo 14.5.10; Trampedach 1999). A pattern of violent competition among highland warlords generally prevailed (Strabo 12.6.2; Syme 1939; 1986; Grünewald 2004, 119–23). On occasion, leadership was wrested from the hands of the hereditary elite by charismatic leaders who emerged from the impoverished herders of the highlands; for example, the 3rd century CE warlord Lydius, who “had been brought up in the brigandage customary to his nation, and surrounding himself with a band of similar men, pillaged the whole of Pamphylia and Lycia” (Zos. 1.69, trans. R.T. Ridley, Canberra, 1982).

In other words, even among the tribal elements, sharp cleavages existed between dynasts and renegades, landowners and pastoralists, rich men and poor. These potential sources of conflict were offset by a collective sense of cultural identity. This is demonstrated by the Luwian names of regional cults and deities, by the iconographic displays of funeral reliefs and by the persistence of Luwian family nomenclature (Houwink ten Cate 1961, 44, 190; Er 2017, 217, 271–73). In this last respect, Matthew Dillon's demonstration (Rauh et al. 2009, 298) that some 92% of the surviving nomenclature in Roman-era epigraphical records of western Rough Cilicia is Cilician (i.e., Luwian) seems noteworthy. It proves that the culturally assimilated population of the coast, who accepted Roman imperium, paid taxes, and governed themselves according to the Graeco-Roman institutions of *Boule kai Demos*, was essentially indigenous, even more so that the contemporary inhabitants of eastern Rough Cilicia or the hinterland, at least insofar as nomenclature is concerned.

These Luwian cultural attributes become pivotal as we turn to consider the archaeological landscape of the midlands and highlands of western Rough Cilicia. The RCSP encountered several Isaurian-type necropolis clusters in these midlands, including those at Nergis Tepe (RC 9902), Ilica Kale (RC 0305), Sivaste (RC 0301), Kenetepe (RC 0304), Çoruş (RC 1103), Direvli (RC 9722) and Lamos (RC 0000). All of these sites are situated on the coastal side of the Taurus Mountains; in fact, Nergis Tepe is situated merely 5 km from the coast (Fig. 2). The Isaurian character of these ritual centers is articulated by tightly clustered assemblages of larnaces (*ostothekai*), small altars, pedestals, miniature house tombs and rock cut tombs, many with architecturally sculpted facades. Most of these small monuments are ornamented with a consistent assemblage of sculpted reliefs: armed horsemen, panoplies of armor, birds of prey, shrouded female figures, seated lions on the gabled lids of the house tombs and, most importantly, family portraits representing the *Totenmahl* of Isaurian burial rituals. The *totenmahl* reliefs appear to portray entire families, sometimes multiple generations. The primitive style of the reliefs contrasts distinctly with examples of “refined” Graeco-Roman sculpture that survive throughout the region, not only in coastal Rough Cilicia, but also at Isaurian sites such as Isaura Nova (Swoboda et al. 1935, 15, 32, 139; Winterstein 2013; Hoff 2016; Laflı 2017; Er 2017, figs. 5.12, 5.16, 5.20, 5.72, 5.85). This suggests that the art form was traditional. Yasmin Er (2017, 217) has identified these necropolis clusters as the archetypal features of Isaurian culture. Although their existence in the coastal lowlands cannot be ruled out (Alföldi-Rosenbaum et al. 1967, 53), all the Isaurian necropolis clusters investigated by the RCSP and found in situ are situated in the midlands between 300 and 900 m elevation. As such they appear to reflect the limits of an Isaurian cultural horizon that extended from the Isaurian hinterland to the *mesogeia* of western Rough Cilicia (Matei et al. 2014). Together with the 92% Luwian nomenclature of the epigraphy of the region, these attributes

demonstrate that the transhumant pastoralists of the Rough Cilician *mesogeia* and those of the Isaurian tribal elements on the opposite side of the Taurus Mountains were culturally one and the same.

Returning to the question of whether a connection existed between the warlords of the Isaurian interior and the coastal population of Rough Cilicia, much would have depended on the effectiveness of communications and the vicissitudes of political ascendancy in either region. For example, although Appuašu of Pirindu originated as a highland chieftain, he established a second capital at the mouth of the Calycadnus River (Ura) and appears to have constructed numerous strategically situated citadels along the coast (Kaye and Rauh 2020, 143–51). A similar pattern emerged with Isaurian chieftains during the turmoil of the 3rd century CE. An imperial usurper named Trebellianus, who was referred to as an *archipirata*, assumed the title of emperor, struck coins and established an imperial palace at an Isaurian stronghold (SHA *Tyr. Trig.* 26.2; Grünwald 2004, 115). Although many assume Trebellianus to be fictitious, his behavior conforms to a pattern. In the 490s CE another Isaurian noble, Longinus of Selinus, mounted a rebellion against his brother, the emperor Anastasius, from fortified bases at Selinus and Antiochia ad Cragum. When defeated by Anastasius, Longinus and his allies retreated into the Taurus, yet were able to hold out for five years by importing foodstuffs through Antiochia, all the while conducting piratical raids as far removed as Lycia, Cyprus, Rhodes and Syria (Theophanes *Chronographia* 139–40; Lenski 1999a, 428–29). Despite the obvious separation in time and context, in other words, examples of Isaurian warlords who dominated the highlands, yet engaged in seaborne piracy do present themselves. One scenario might posit, therefore, that when offshore authority was weak, warlords such as Appuašu, Trebellianus and Longinus filled the void along the coast. What is less clear are the mechanisms by which this was achieved.

Comparative cultural anthropology furnishes one likely scenario for a pattern of communication, namely, the mobile lifeways of the transhumant pastoralists themselves. Modern studies of transhumant herders in the Pindos range in Greece (Wace and Thompson 1972, 19, 77, 177; Chang 1993) reveal a similar settlement pattern of lowland farming, mixed agro-pastoral activities in the midlands and transhumant pastoralism in the highlands. Those who engaged in herding existed at the margin of society: they lacked landholdings and needed to calculate the value of their herds versus the rents, dues and fees owed to landowners and political authorities. When pasturing their flocks in the highlands, they supplemented their incomes through timbering, mining, muleteering and overland trade. Economically constrained, these pastoralists were easily provoked to banditry and outlawry, particularly at times when external authorities attempted to impose economic authority. In this respect, it is worth considering the example of the violent uprising of the Ceitae that erupted against the Roman client king Archelaus II of Cappadocia in 36 CE. Archelaus had attempted to conduct a census in the Taurus hinterlands and, as Rudi Lindner (1983, 53) demonstrates for medieval Turkey, censuses were long abhorrent to transhumant populations, who correctly interpreted them as preliminaries to taxation. Dwelling on the margins of settled agricultural society, living off the land and expropriating resources by force when required, pastoralists invariably view taxation as an illegitimate interference to their traditional way of life, particularly when authorities furnished little in return. During the era of the pirates, “mountain Cilicians” conceivably exploited the resentment of pastoralists dwelling to either side of the Taurus “Green line” to plunder the coast and to promote piratical activities.

The question remains, whether the transhumant economy and cultural affinities of the pastoralists who dwelled in the midlands of western Rough Cilicia were sufficient linkages to facilitate Isaurian domination of communities on the shore. This is where sites such as the Hellenistic site at Sugözü Yayla (RC 1102), the Isaurian necropolis at Yunt (RC 0702) and the fortified Isaurian settlement at Çokele Kale above Coracesium become important (Bean and Mitford 1970, 105, 126; Rauh 2003, 183; Rauh et al. 2019, 12; Fig. 2). These sites conceivably straddled pathways across the Taurus “Green Line” and enabled warriors from the interior to descend into the Cilician *mesogeia*. Such a threat is demonstrated by the presence of a Ptolemaic bastion at Lamos (800 masl), as well as by the Isaurian-styled narrative relief that was discovered by the survey at the Isaurian necropolis cluster at Kenetepe (RC 0304) (Fig. 6). This 5 m tall relief displays an arrangement of Isaurian icons, including a horseman, a panoply of armor with medallion, a warrior with spear, a front-facing warrior with scabbard, birds of prey and the emblematic bust of a shrouded female. Although the accompanying Greek text



Fig. 6. Narrative relief found at the Isaurian necropolis cluster at Kenetepe (RC 0304) (photo by N.K. Rauh).

proved unreadable, these two remains, one Hellenistic, the other Early Roman, demonstrate that the Rough Cilician *mesogeia* remained contested territory (Rauh et al. 2009, 296–305).

Highland pathways appear to have furnished the necessary lines of communication between the maritime settlements along the coast and the inhabitants of the interior. During periods when security along the coast was enforced by offshore naval powers, the economic equilibrium of the transhumant society was possibly disrupted, provoking reprisals in the form of banditry and the highland rebellions described by our sources. However, during periods of political vacuum at sea, the *tyrannoi* of the “mountain Cilicians” conceivably exploited their influence over the highland populations on both sides of the Taurus to impose their will on coastal settlements. To explore this last point, we will employ least cost path analysis to consider the direction of likely thrusts from the interior to the shore based on the chronological sequence of piracy as presented in the sources; first by means of a least cost path between the Isaurian settlements of Isaura Vetus and Nova and the coast, then one between the hinterland *castella* of the Lasseis and the maritime settlements in western Rough Cilicia.

LEAST COST PATH ANALYSIS

Least-cost-pathways (LCPs) are a useful means to analyze the evolving interconnection between the Cilician coast and Isaurian highlands. This form of geographical analysis is designed to show the easiest route through a given landscape. Relying on a list of 70 sites in Rough Cilicia and 16 in Isauria furnished by the RCSP (Rauh and Pejša 2021a, 2021b), we employ an iterative model to reconstruct all potential routes from any given site in Rough Cilicia to one in Isauria. To accurately simulate the cost of traveling, Tobler's hiking function (THF) was used. Devised in 1993 by avid hiker and geographer Waldo Tobler, it estimates walking velocity relative to slope (Tobler 1993). The equation, as described by Goodchild (2020, 558), is as follows, $v=6e^{-3.5|g+0.05|}$, "where v is walking velocity in Km/h, and g is the gradient of the slope expressed as tangent of the slope angle and e the constant 2.71818" (Goodchild 2020, 559).

If Isaurian warlords supported piracy as a seasonal activity, it would be worthwhile investigating the coastal bases from which they could undertake these activities. Early Roman campaigns focused on regions west of Cilicia. Marcus Antonius Orator's much derided campaign involved him capturing Side in Pamphylia. Philip de Souza (1999, 137–40) characterizes Servilius Vatia's campaign against Lycian pirates as pacifying the pro-Mithridatic eastern Lycians to the benefit of the pro-Roman western Lycians. After the expulsion of anti-Lycian League forces from the region, Vatia continued his campaign into Isaurian territory, suppressing the fortified communities of Isaura Vetus and Isaura Nova. The fact that Vatia earned the agnomen *Isauricus* indicates that, together with Lycia and Pamphylia, Isauria enjoyed an important place in the pirate hegemony. The suppression of Pamphylia and Isauria may have quieted things for a while, as resistance coalesced to new centers of gravity. In 67 BCE, the pirate bases at Coracesium and the Cragus were perceived as the largest pirate threat and across the Taurus directly north of them resided neighboring tribes of the Ceitae, including the Lasseis and the Cennetae. Still turbulent in 6, 36 and 52 CE, these elements were clearly unaffected by the suppression of Isauria in the previous century (Syme 1934, 1986). To what degree were these the "mountain Cilicians" who opposed Pompeius and who, according to Tacitus, "had already broken the peace on many occasions" (*Ann.* 12.55, trans. J. Jackson, Cambridge, Mass., 1937)?

LCPs can be used to evaluate the links between the Isaurians based in Nova and Vetus and the coastal regions of Pamphylia. These LCPs show not only the shortest distance between the locations, but also the total *pathcost*, or the difficulty of a given path. If warlords from these regions were dominating the coast, this analysis would be useful for identifying the ideal naval centers for these groups, as well as suggesting how they may have traveled to them. The major coastal centers in this region are Attaleia, Aspendos, Coracesium, Perga and Side. Table 2 includes distance and *pathcost* between these coastal sites and Isaurian strongholds, while the map in Figure 7 shows the LCPs between them.

	Isaura Vetus	Isaura Vetus	Isaura Nova	Isaura Nova
	Distance (km)	Pathcost (units)	Distance (km)	Pathcost (units)
Coracesium	90.01	1241.45	91.28	1266.41
Side	92.96	1148.73	101.25	1257.80
Attaleia	145.00	1779.34	152.75	1889.99
Aspendos	104.74	1289.99	112.93	1400.03
Perga	132.80	1634.95	140.60	1746.56

Table 2. Distance and pathcost between the Isaurian settlements of Isaura Vetus and Nova and the major coastal centers in Pamphylia.



Fig. 7. Map displaying the optimal paths between Isaurian strongholds and major Pamphylian coastal settlements (map by A. Dawson).

LCPs suggest that the two coastal settlements closest to the Isaurian strongholds were Coracesium and Side. Coracesium has the shortest route in terms of distance. However, the steep journey which skirts around some of the higher parts of the Taurus, means the *pathcost* is high. The northeasterly journey from Side has a lower *pathcost* and would have been more efficient. Both Coracesium and Side are mentioned as important centers for early Cilician pirates. Coracesium's value has already been discussed. As far as Side is concerned, according to Strabo (14.3.2), pirates were permitted to trade in its harbor, giving them a convenient market center to fence their goods. These two ports nearest to the Isaurian strongholds provided ideal centers to connect Isaurians to the coast. This may explain why Marcus Antonius Orator captured Side and why Servilius Vatia used it as a staging ground to assault Isaura Vetus. Initial Roman intelligence possibly indicated that an elimination of the Isaurian hinterland threat would cause Cilician piracy to wither. Instead, it appears that a coalescence and relocation of forces in the highlands led to a resurgence elsewhere.

Following the suppression of the Isaurians, tribal disturbances appear to have shifted to the region of the Lasseis, or more specifically to a cluster of settlements in the interior *mesogeia* near the modern Ermenek reservoir along the southern branch of the Göksu (Calycadnus) River. In the Roman era, this area would emerge as the seat of the Decapolis of the Lasseis and the Cennetae. As the names of several settlements (e.g., Germanicopolis, Domitiopolis, Eirenopolis, Titiopolis and Philadelphia) indicate, Roman veteran's colonies were installed throughout this region to secure the peace following decades of military intervention. Since the Ermenek *mesogeia* emerged as a hotbed of resistance in the Early Roman period, for purposes of LCP analysis we will utilize Germanicopolis as the symbolic location of the "mountain Cilicians" who opposed Pompeius (Fig. 8).

From the settlements near Ermenek, the "mountain Cilicians" had excellent accesses to Rough Cilicia, being uniquely situated at the confluence of the two major routes between the coast and highlands. One of these runs

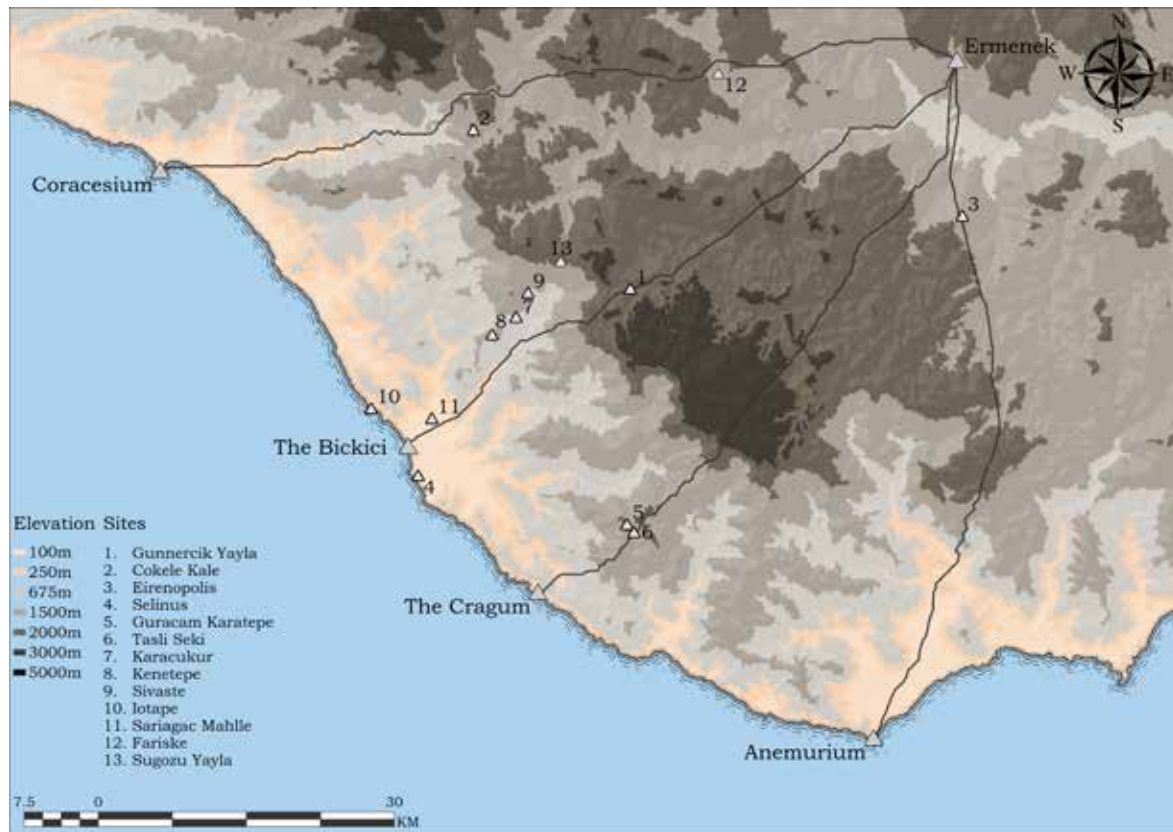


Fig. 8. Map displaying the optimal paths between Ermenek and major Cilicians coastal settlements (map by A. Dawson).

northward from Anamur (the location of a Hellenistic *castellum* in 197 BCE), the other runs eastward from the Bickici. Relying on these pathways, we will consider four major coastal settlements in Rough Cilicia that were inhabited at the time of the pirates: Coracesium, the Bickici basin (between Iotape and Selinus), Antiochia ad Cragum and Anemurium. By using LCPs to hypothesize the routes between these areas and the posited Isaurian settlement at Ermenek, we can analyze relations between the two.

	Ermenek	
	Distance (km)	Pathost (units)
Coracesium	89.65	1284.45
Bickici	72.63	1083.42
The Cragum	74.64	1125.05
Anemurium	73.93	1069.82

Table 3. Distance and pathcost between Ermenek and four major coastal settlements in Rough Cilicia.

When comparing the routes between Ermenek and Cilicia to those from between Isaura Vetus and Pamphylia, we can see that routes are shorter and more cost effective for an Isaurian-Cilicia connection. This would suggest that the Lalasseis were indeed in a better position to exert influence over coastal pirate enclaves following the suppression of the Isaurians. Of the four routes, the one from Coracesium appears to be something of an outlier. The easterly route follows the modern Dim Çay, then crosses a valley below Çokele Kale, before following the ridge eastwards past Fariske and then to Ermenek. Despite Coracesium being a prime

site and the terminus of Pompeius' campaign, it is the longest route to the heart of the Ermenek *mesogeia* by both cost and distance. However, it is important to contextualize these results. The distance is still shorter than the journey to Isaura Vetus and only somewhat higher in cost, making it still a convenient base for hinterland groups. Furthermore, with the loss of major harbors in Lycia and Pamphylia, Coracesium would be one of the remaining few maritime centers available to the pirates as base. The fact that the LCP passes the fortress of Çokele Kale and the necropolis of Fariske would seem to suggest that the "mountain Cilicians" of the Ermenek *mesogeia* were interested in controlling traffic along this route and were indeed influencing Coracesium.

The relative distance from Ermenek to Coracesium may explain the Hellenistic presence in coastal regions closer to the Lasseis-Cennetae federation, namely, the areas best suited for pirate visibility, Bickici and Cragus. The route from the Bickici region follows the river northeast before passing through Günnercik Yayla, then follows the Göksu River to Ermenek. This is shorter and easier than traveling from Coracesium, which is perhaps why the Bickici route frequently intersects with sites related to the Lasseis-Cennetae federation. Günnercik Yayla was a seasonal site for grazing livestock. Whilst following the Bickici river, the route is also littered with Hellenistic material in Sariağac Mahalle (RC 9908), Kenetepe (RC 0304), Karaçukur (RC 0303), Sivaste (RC 0301) and Sugözü Yayla (RC1102), all of which also demonstrate hinterland cultural attributes. In terms of visibility, the settlement of Kenetepe and Sivaste are both covert and ideal for monitoring traffic going up and down the Bickici. Despite being ideally located for piracy and displaying a strong Isaurian presence, the Bickici basin lacks the harbors for large ships (though Iotape and Selinus are nearby). This might in turn explain the prominence of the Cragus. The route from Antiochia ad Cragum to Ermenek again passes useful sites related to piracy. These include an ideal pirate monitoring station in Gocuk Asarı, a lumber camp and accompanying village in Gürçam Karatepe (RC 0305) and Taslı Seki (RC 0306). All three settlements contain clusters of Hellenistic material. The harbors at Antiochia ad Cragum with closer proximity to Ermenek may have made it an ideal alternate to Coracesium for "mountain Cilicians" based in Ermenek. This may help explain why it is mentioned as a capital of the pirates by Appian (*Mith.* 14.92), but otherwise goes unmentioned by other sources.

Finally, Anemurium, which while not suited for piracy appears to be the most easily accessible site from Ermenek. The path largely follows the modern 33–62 highway, before passing through Eirenopolis (Irenbol), a second Roman-era settlement of the Decapolis, and then heading north to Ermenek. Along with Philadelphia and Germanicopolis, Eirenopolis are believed to have been established as veterans' colonies following the suppression of the general revolt of the Ceitae led by Troxobor in 52 CE. Though perhaps not a prime location for piracy, given its relative ease of access to these highland settlements, it is possible that the Ceitae generally viewed Anemurium as their territorial heritage. In this context, Troxobor's uprising could be seen as a continuation of the Isaurian push eastwards, having been suppressed by the Romans further west.

The LCPs shown here appear to provide some context for a Roman-Isaurian conflict over the Cilician coast. Culturally incompatible with the Romans, the Isaurians were repeatedly suppressed but never assimilated. The various military campaigns, spanning from 100 BCE to 54 CE, suggest a cat-and-mouse dynamic, where Roman armies destroy one Isaurian connection to the coast, only to see another one emerge elsewhere. At times, when a particular Isaurian tribal element appears to be in ascendancy, the nearest maritime centers on the coast also appear to be prominent. Initially, this appears to be Side and Coracesium, under the influence of Isaura Nova and Vetus. Following the deterioration of relations with Romans and the sack of Isaura Vetus, a new axis was possibly forged between the tribal elements in the Ermenek *mesogeia* and the pirate enclaves at Coracesium, the Bickici Basin and the Cragus. In this context, it is perhaps possible to see the benefits of Pompeius' campaign to the renegade sailors who had flocked to the coast of Rough Cilicia. Initially forced into the region due to conflict with Rome, these sailors possibly came to find themselves dominated by surrogates of hinterland warlords. In these circumstances, many may have found Pompeius' proposals of land and franchise in 67 BCE more appealing. In short, merchants and sailors at that juncture may have had more to gain by choosing the side of Rome over that of the Isaurian warlords, since peace with Rome and protection from the Isaurians would only have proven preferable to war. This perhaps explains the speed at which the pirate settlements in western Rough Cilicia capitulated. However, even with their coastal influence diminished, there was still no

peace among the Isaurians and the Romans. If the Lalasseis-Cennetae federation became the dominant force in the hinterlands and wished to reestablish themselves on the coast, LCPs suggest the ideal coastal site to raid would be Anemurium. In which case, the uprisings in the 1st century CE can be seen not only as an extension of this cultural conflict, but also as a continuation of the process of coalescence, relocation and resurgence.

CONCLUSION

If, as suggested, piracy in Cilicia was catalyzed by a diaspora of Hellenistic maritime actors into the region, then connections between the Isaurian hinterlands and coastal Cilicia would have been mutually beneficial. As already discussed, the Isaurians had a penchant for raiding. Where wealth is measured in terms of livestock, rustling can become a prominent practice. This form of raid mentality lends itself well to a transition into piracy. Mohamed Ingiriis (2013, 241) states his belief that the origins of contemporary Somali piracy transcend the more obvious explanations of poverty and illegal fishing that results from local political instability. Instead, he posits that Somali piracy has its origin in camel rustling practices employed by Somali pastoralists. In this way, Somali piracy was not simply a new phenomenon brought on by changing conditions, but instead a long-standing Somali cultural tradition that pivoted to the seas. As maritime activity began to increase on the Cilician coast, Isaurian pastoralists conceivably acquired additional means of employment alongside herding, muleteering, timbering, mining and itinerant farm laboring. This complements Appian's comment that "having lost both livelihood and country by reason of the war and fallen into extreme destitution, [the pirates] harvested the sea instead of the land" (*Mith.* 14.92, trans. H. White, New York, 1899), not to mention Plutarch's comment that the pirates drew their recruits from "men whose wealth gave them power, and those whose lineage was illustrious" (*Pomp.* 24.2, trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1917). Not only would sailors and merchants new to the region have acquired local recruits and collaborators for their maritime ventures, but Cilicians and Isaurians would have benefitted from the process of settling sailors in opportune locations and furnishing them with foodstuffs, supplies and the knowledge of local pathways.

At times when collaboration between pirates operating on the coast and Isaurian highlanders was great, the shorter, less costly routes to the coast demonstrate an overlay of Hellenistic activity and Isaurian cultural attributes. For example, a LCPs analysis would suggest that from the Ermenek *mesogeia* of the Lalasseis, the easiest coastal region of Cilicia would have been the Bickici river basin from its headwaters at Sugözü Yayla to its settlements, press complexes and kiln site on the shore. The hypothesis that Isaurians used this route to exert control over Cilicia is supported by the fact that these routes pass by sites that existed at the time of the pirates, were rich in Isaurian material culture and were ideal for surveying the wider region. Later, Roman settlements that remained hostile towards Isaurian tribes appear further removed and devoid of intersecting routes with hinterland Isaurian settlements. What this discussion has demonstrated is that the combined historical and archaeological evidence for the Cilician pirates conforms very well to empirical analyses of the chosen landscape.



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Piratical Ships of the Aegean

A Comparative and Diachronic Approach of the Ships Used by the Pirates of the Aegean during the Classical and Hellenistic Period

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ABSTRACT

The ship has always been the primary weapon and asset of every form of piracy. The ability of pirates to build, maintain and man their ships would condition the success of any piratical endeavor, while the size and the type of these ships was, in turn, determined by their owners' needs and abilities. In the Aegean Sea, from the beginning of the history of piracy, lighter and faster oared vessels were preferred, which were able to take advantage of their speed, as well as the region's geomorphology, moving swiftly between friendly and hostile coasts and islands, and offering the possibility of efficient maneuvering and stealth. At the same time, their size was dependent on the ability of the piratical communities to support their construction and manning. This paper explores the typology of the Classical and Hellenistic-era piratical ships in the Aegean, as these are known through written sources and iconography, giving a comparative image of these ships and connecting their use with practical issues, such as cost, manning and seaworthiness.

INTRODUCTION

Piracy has been one of the main features of the maritime cultural landscape in the Aegean Sea already since Prehistory, as iconography, textual evidence and verbal tradition has documented, and has remained one of the most important (and quite troublesome for many) occupations of the locals until the 19th century (Ormerod 1924, 13–4; Krantonelli 1985, 1991, 1998). The ramifications of piratical activity were numerous (political, financial, social, symbolic), affecting nearly all aspects of life on the islands and coasts of the archipelago. Nevertheless, the practice of piracy required one essential tool and/or weapon, and that was the ship. The availability of ships, their numbers, sizes, crews and seaworthiness dictated to a great extent the possibility of practicing piracy in a successful way, as well as its impact on the communities that employed it (or suffered by it). It is thus essential to have a clear view of the types of ships used by pirates throughout the ages, in order to fully understand and study the extent, form and impact of piracy both to perpetrators and victims.

This paper deals with the ships that were used by pirates in the Aegean Sea during the Classical and Hellenistic period based on written sources, which form the bulk of evidence concerning piracy for this period, but also on iconography, archaeology, experimental archaeology and ethnographical parallels. The period under study was very important in the history of the Aegean and the Mediterranean in general, witnessing the development of great naval powers, such as Athens or Rome, as well as an increase and better organization of piracy, especially towards the end of the period (Tarn 1930, 129–41; Morrison and Coates 1996, 1–93). This study seeks to give

a diachronic approach of the development of piratical ships and the practicalities related with their use, such as their seaworthiness, fighting power and logistics. This is an aspect of piracy that has not yet been sufficiently explored in such a manner.

METHODOLOGY: POTENTIAL, PROBLEMS AND MAIN QUESTIONS

Piracy in the ancient world is a rather elusive subject of study (de Souza 1999, 2). The reason is simple: it was predominantly (as has remained until today) an activity practiced in the margins of organized society and usually by small maritime communities, who had little interest or means in leaving proper documentation of their activities. Piracy was, also, often interweaved with other, legal, activities, such as trade and warfare, resulting in the limits between the predatory/piratical economies and domination spaces or *thalassocracies* being obscure and difficult to establish with precision in historiography (Bresson 2008, 214–19; for a discussion on the various approaches on the issue, see Deramaix 2013, 359–87). Things become worse by the fact that the oared vessels commonly employed for piratical activities in antiquity do not survive as shipwrecks in the region, due to their light construction and lack of cargo to protect their wooden hulls (Wilson 2011, 33–9; Boetto 2012), and by the fact that when galley images survive, there is no evidence to connect them to any piratical activity whatsoever. And this is true also in the Aegean Sea, despite the richness in finds, both in the sea and on land, and iconography.

The only direct (to a certain degree) source of information concerning the ships used by the pirates of the Classical and Hellenistic Aegean is, therefore, written evidence. The period studied here is, most probably, the richest in terms of written documentation of nearly all aspects of contemporary life, with sources ranging from historical texts to inscriptions and from poetry to graffiti. The methodology employed by this study is based on the thorough examination of all written evidence available and their correlation with archaeological data, iconography and historical parallels, in order not only to merely document the types of ships used by pirates, but also to explore the practicalities and logistics of their employment and the ramifications these could have in the practice of contemporary piracy. The basic questions this paper tries to answer concern the types of ships used by pirates of the period studied, whether these were specially-built vessels or whether they were the same as ships used in other types of maritime conflicts, whether these ships had a dual use for trade too, and, finally, why did pirates choose specific types of vessels.

THE EVIDENCE

The Classical period

Despite the establishment of strong state naval fleets, such as the famous Athenian one, during the Classical period, piracy remained a constant threat to ship traffic and coastal communities (Ormerod 1924, 108–9; de Souza 1999, 43–96). The earliest references to piratical ships in the period come from two passages from Thucydides. In the first one, the historian describes how some Megarians, who conspired with the Athenians in 431 BCE, would pretend to be pirates, using a small boat or *akation*, which they carried on a cart in and out of the city walls every night:

“Every night for a long time back, under pretense of marauding [ὡς λησταί], in order to have a means of opening the gates, they had been used, with the consent of the officer in command, to carry by night a sculling boat [ἀκάτιον ἀμφορικόν] upon a cart along the ditch to the sea, and so to sail out” (Thuc. 4.67.3, trans. J.M. Dent, London and New York, 1910).

In the second passage, Thucydides describes the events in Sphacteria (425 BCE). He documents how the Athenian general Demosthenes, preparing the defense of the islet, took weaponry “from a thirty-oared [τριακοντόρου/*triaconter*] Messenian privateer [ληστρικῆς] and a boat [κέλητος/*keles*] belonging to some Messenians who happened to have come to them” (Thuc. 4.9.1, trans. J.M. Dent, London and New York, 1910).

The use of *triaconters* as raiding and plundering ships is also attested by Polyaeus, who reports that around 378 BCE Iphicrates raided the coasts of Phoenicia with one hundred such ships with great success (*Strat.* 3.9.63). Although the reference does not describe Iphicrates’ actions as piratical, the use of these ships for a successful raid implies that it was ideal for piratical use too (Casson 1971, 125). Around 350 BCE, Aeschines refers to the ship *epaktrokeles* as a proverbial pirate ship, in which men with great lust and desire board as pirates to seek their fortune: “these it is that fill the robbers’ bands [τὰ ληστήρια], that send men on board the pirates’ boats [τὸν ἐπακτροκέλητα]” (Aeschin. *In Tim.* 191, trans. C.D. Adams, London and New York, 1919).

A new type of piratical ship, the *hemiolia*, which was a light galley that included a second file of oarsmen at its center, appears in the 4th century BCE and a series of references in written sources underlines its importance. It is first reported in the *Etymologicum Magnum*, at a reference roughly dated in the 4th century BCE, where a Carian *hemiolia*, most likely belonging to pirates, is mentioned (450.38). Also, Arrian (*Anab.* 3.2.4) reports that in 331 BCE Aristonikos, the tyrant of Methymna in Lesbos, sailed into the harbor of Chios with five pirate *hemioliai* (ξὺν ἡμιολίαις ληστροκαῖς πέντε) before being apprehended by Alexander’s troops and put to death (Morrison and Coates 1996, 262).

The Hellenistic period

The conquest of the Aegean and Ionia by Alexander brought a short period of peace and safety in the seas, which was, however, soon to finish, with the series of wars of the Successors, in which pirates took advantage of the instability and were also employed by the rulers of the period as corsairs (de Souza 1999, 43–96). The *hemiolia* continues to be firmly associated with piracy. Theophrastus, around 300 BCE, mentions the term as the proverbial symbol of piratical threat, seen by cowards lurking behind each cape: “The coward, when he is at sea, claims that promontories are pirate ships [ἡμιολίας] (*Char.* 25.2, trans. J. Diggle, Cambridge, Mass., 2004). Even in the 2nd century CE, Longus reports Carian pirates raiding the coast with a *hemiolia* (*Daphnis and Chloë* 1.28.1). In the early 3rd century BCE, the Rhodians counteract the piratical *hemiolia* by developing an improved and larger version of it, the *trihemiolia*, one of the most successful warships of the period (Casson 1971, 130–31; Gabrielsen 2001, 224; Pacheco 2020, 101). The *trihemiolia* was heavier and faster than the *hemiolia* by being a full bireme along its whole length, but with a third file of oarsmen added at its center and, interestingly enough, is never cited as a vessel used by pirates, but solely by official state fleets.

About 200 BCE, another type of ship is reported as a pirate vessel. The *lembos* (λέμβος) is first mentioned as the main vessel of the Liburnian pirates in the Adriatic, along with the later *liburnae* (Polyb. 2.9.1–2; Livy 45.30.12–15; see also Boršić et al. 2021), but is soon introduced in the Aegean too. In 197 BCE, Philip V sailed to a parley at the Maliac Gulf in central Greece on a *pristis* (πρίστις, i.e., *saw-fish*), accompanied by five *lemboi* (Polyb. 18.1.1). It is very likely that the *lemboi* and *pristis* (possibly a heavier version of the former) were similar to the *liburna* and were used for similar purposes, i.e., for piracy, raids etc. (Casson 1971, 25–6, 126–27; Morrison and Coates 1996, 263–64).

The last heyday of piracy in the Aegean during the Hellenistic period was the Mithridatic wars (88–63 BCE), during which the region became the main theater of a series of conflicts, both on land and in the sea (Morrison and Coates 1996, 115–19). Mithridates employed and supported the Cilician pirates, who thus became powerful and numerous, greatly improving their military power and organization (App. *Mith.* 14.96; Ormerod 1924, 190–247; de Souza 1999, 97–148). Initially, they employed relatively small ships, such as *hemioliai* and *myoparones*, but they soon managed to build or acquire larger vessels, such as biremes (δίκροτοι), triremes and even, for the first time, heavier *cataphract* vessels (Plut. *Pomp.* 24.4–5). The final defeat of Mithridates and his allies and the

occupation of Cilicia by the Romans brought practically the end of Hellenistic piracy (de Souza 1999, 149–224).

DISCUSSION

Typology of the pirate ships

The Classical and Hellenistic period saw the creation and development of multitude of galley types, each with different size, crew and purpose (Morrison 1995, 68–77; Morrison and Coates 1996, 255–78). As it has become clear, however, from the presentation of the evidence, the ships used by the pirates belonged to relatively small types, fitted best for their uses within piratical activities. In this section, each ship type is presented and discussed according to its size and size of crew, from the smallest to the largest one.

The *akation* (ἀκάτιον) and the *lembos* (λέμβος) appear to have been the smallest piratical ships used during the period studied, since both terms mean *boat* or *skiff* in ancient Greek. The *akation* appears only once in written sources in relation to piracy and in the peculiar circumstances of the Megarians using a skiff that can be easily carried on a cart (see above), so it is very likely that it was not a term employed regularly for piratical vessels. It is also possible that the vessel was too small to accommodate any important attacking force to be useful in piratical activities. *Lembos*, on the other hand, appears much more often as a piratical ship in written sources. According to these references (as well as to others, which are not related to piracy), the term described various undecked small galleys with 16 to 50 oarsmen and was quite similar to the *liburna*, with which it operated side-by-side in Hellenistic Illyria (Ormerod 1924, 29; Morrison and Coates 1996, 264; Boršić et al. 2021) and probably appears on the Illyrian coins of the 2nd century BCE (Höckman 1997, fig. 1.2–3, 5–6). It is possible that the *liburna* was introduced in the Aegean by the so-called Tyrrhenian pirates, who had expanded their operations there in the 2nd century BCE (Ormerod 1924, 127). A unique example of a *lembos* most likely survives in Pisa (Boat C): the well-preserved vessel was a small undecked galley with six pairs of oars, a single mast and a cutwater, that could have been used for various activities, such as espionage, raids or simply for ferrying passengers within harbors and estuaries (Bonino 2010; Olaberria et al. 2023).

The *triakonter* (τριακόντορος) was one of the simplest and lightest types of galleys employed in the Aegean and known already from the Geometric period (Ormerod 1924, 29; Casson 1971, 44–5). It was a light, undecked monoreme galley with 15 benches of oarsmen, arranged in single files on the sides of the ship. It was most probably equipped, like almost all oared vessels of the period, with a cutwater at the bow. It is unknown whether such a small vessel could also employ a ram in battle, being probably too light to withstand the tensions created by ramming. It had limited space both for provisions or loot, as well as for extra marines and, as described by Polyaeus for Iphicrates' raid in Phoenicia (see above), oarsmen doubled as fighters. Thanks to its small size and corresponding draft, a *triakonter* was not only swift, but it could also approach shallow waters and estuaries and be hauled on beaches and required a smaller crew. There are no known depictions of this type of ship during the period studied.

The *myoparo* (μυοπάρων), which means *mouse* in ancient Greek, is known as one of the ships used by the Cilician pirates in the early 1st century BCE, but little is known about its size and form. A unique image of it survives in the 3rd-century CE ship mosaic of Althiburus in Tunisia, where a series of ships are depicted, along with their names (Gauckler 1905, 134–35, fig. 16; Duval 1949; Redaelli 2014). It appears to have been similar to the *lembos* described above: a small, undecked oared vessel (Ormerod 1924, 30; Casson 1971, 132, fig. 137).

As its name suggests (κέλης, i.e., *racehorse*), the *keles* (*celes* in Latin) and its diminutives (κελήτιον) or variations (ἐπακτροκέλης) were swift oared ships, ideal for piratical use. Very little is known about this ship, which appears in the Althiburus mosaic as a small, simple galley. It was most likely very similar to the *lembos* and the *myoparo*, whereas the *epaktrokeles* must have been a larger version of it (Ormerod 1924, 30; Casson 1971, 161–62, fig. 137).

Probably the pirates' favorite ship, the *hemiolia* (ἡμιολία) was a two-banked, undecked variation of a

triakonter or a *pentekonter* (Ormerod 1924, 29; Coates 1995, 139–40; Morrison 1995, 73–4; Morrison and Coates 1996, 317–18, fig. 73). It had 30 to 50 oarsmen arranged in two superimposed files but, in contrast to larger vessels such as biremes or triremes, the second file could only be accommodated in the wider central part of the hull (hence the name that means *one-and-a-half*). It has also been suggested that a *hemiolia* had a slenderer hull compared to the similar *liburna*, because it used a rowing outrigger (*apostis*), which allowed more efficient rowing, without widening the hull itself (Morrison and Coates 1996, 317–18). Thanks to its low length-to-beam ratio, it was an easily maneuverable ship, especially when compared to the much slimmer triremes or heavier galleys, and could accommodate marines, whereas a light deck protected the rowing crew. It is estimated it could reach a speed of 7½ knots, less than a *trihemiolia* or a trireme but more than a *liburna* (Morrison and Coates 1996, Appendix D). It is possible that the *hemiolia* was developed as a pirate ship in Caria, since it is related by written sources with Carian pirates (Morrison 1995, 73).

The breme, the trireme and the *cataphract* appear only once in relation to piratical fleets, and that is in the fleets of the Cilician pirates that allied with Mithridates in the early 1st century BCE. All three types were widely employed by contemporary and earlier naval fleets, and they were relatively heavy vessels, with crews of 100 to 200 people, whereas the *cataphracts* were even heavier (usually *tetreres*/'fours' or *penteres*/'fives'; Casson 1971, 123, n. 94), with closed superstructures in order to protect their rowing crews (Morrison and Coates 1996, 255–57). Nevertheless, these cannot be considered common pirate ships, since they only appear within this historical framework, when the Cilician pirate cities developed, thanks to the wealth accumulated through raiding and the support by Mithridates, proper naval fleet.

Evolution of the pirate ships

According to the written sources discussed above, in the Classical and Hellenistic Aegean there seems to have been an evolution from simpler and lighter to more elaborate and heavier piratical ships. The earliest ships employed in piracy were the small *triakonters* and *keletes*, which were relatively small vessels. The operation of great naval fleets during the 5th and the early 4th centuries BCE in the Aegean most likely prevented pirates from building, capturing or buying larger ships and limited them to the simplest galleys they could afford, which also fitted their purposes better. The rising of piracy within the endemic warfare of the Successors after Alexander boosted the size of piratical ships and that is when the *hemiolia* appeared, a larger and heavier ship, which was no match for the much larger Hellenistic galleys in terms of fighting power, but was much faster and easier to handle and hide. Smaller vessels, such as *myoparones* and *lemboi*, continued to be used, although the *hemiolia* became the “trademark” of the pirates of the period. Finally, as Cilician piracy reached its peak –with the organization of a proper “pirate state”, the acquisition of enough resources, but also the need to deploy stronger vessels to fight the naval fleets of the Romans– we witness a surge both in the number and in the size of vessels employed, and for the first time triremes and *cataphracts* appear (Morrison 1995, 73; Morrison and Coates 1996, 115–19). This period, however, is unique in the history of ancient piracy and most probably no ship heavier than a *hemiolia* was ever properly used for any piratical operations in the area during the Graeco-Roman antiquity. It is not surprising that also in much more recent periods, like the 16th–19th centuries, ships of similar dimensions, such as the *fusta*, the *galliota*, the *felouka* or the *mistico*, were used in the Aegean by the local pirates (Ormerod 1924, 26–8; Krantonelli 1985, 341–49; 1991, 425; 1998, 286–88).

Fighting techniques and employment

There is little to no evidence in written sources about the techniques used by the piratical vessels during the period studied and ancient authors hardly ever describe how pirates employed their vessels in battle. Pirate ships always belong to oared types, as would be naturally expected, since the ability to move without the help of wind and to achieve great speed was an essential part of ambushing, raiding and evading pursuing ships. Ramming could have also been employed in battle, but it is quite likely that this would have been possible only by relatively large and sturdier vessels, such as *hemioliai* or triremes (Coates 1995, 133–34). It should also be

noted that capturing an enemy ship would be much more profitable for pirates, who could reuse it or sell it. There is no reference to the existence of marines (*ἐπιβάται*) on pirate vessels. In smaller vessels, where there was also little space for extra troops, the rowing crew could easily double as marines too, but larger ones should have had a number of marines (hoplites, archers etc.) onboard in order to tackle enemy ships in sea battles, as well as hostile forces on land. A useful weapon would have also been catapults, which were a common feature of Hellenistic warships, but there is no reference to their use by pirates. The large piratical fleets of the Cilician pirates were, most likely, organized in the models of other contemporary naval powers, with larger vessels manned by large numbers of well-armed and trained marines, were equipped with rams and catapults, and were employed like every other proper naval fleet of the period, particularly when joining forces with rulers like Mithridates, but there is no direct information about how these fleets were organized and used.

LOGISTICS OF THE PIRATE SHIPS

A vital element of the operation of piratical fleets or single vessels that often eludes the attention of scholars is the logistics related with it. Every ship requires certain resources to be constructed, equipped, manned, provisioned and maintained, especially the oared vessels, which not only needed much larger crews (oarsmen, marines etc.), but also constant maintenance, in order to remain in fighting condition (Coates 1995, 132; Dotson 1995, 217). The ability of a community or state to maintain a fleet (or in the cases of small islands even a single ship) depended on the availability of resources, monetary or not.

A major issue must have been the provisioning of timber, which was often scarce in the arid Aegean islands and would have had to be imported or ships to be constructed in areas, where there were natural forests, such as the coasts of Asia Minor (Morrison and Coates 1996, 354). Although these practices were common in the naval fleets of the period (e.g., the Athenians would construct triremes in Macedonia; Borza 1987, 39), it is doubtful whether pirates had the abilities to fund such endeavors, keeping in mind that local timber would also have to be used for the rest of the regional fleets, consisting of merchant ships, ferries or fishing boats. It is not surprising that the largest piratical fleets were the ones employed by the Cilicians, who had direct access to an extended mountainous hinterland that would easily provide material for galley building.

The same logistic problems would have existed for the rest of the shipbuilding material. Metal was employed for the nails (bronze or copper), although the extent of their use in galley hulls remains unknown (Coates 1995, 131), as well as for anchors (iron, lead or bronze; Kapitän 1984, 36–43; Votruba 2014, 78) and possibly for seathing (lead; Kahanov and Ashkenazi 2011). Rigging equipment (ropes, sails, pulleys etc.) was also essential for navigation, since all ancient galleys would regularly hoist sails and avoid rowing when wind was favorable (Casson 1971, 229–38; Dotson 1995, 220). Finally, special protective primers or other types of paint were important to protect the wooden hull from rotting and from shipworms, but also to decorate them (Galinier and Nantet 2020, 60–8), whereas in one case it is reported by Philostratus that scout and pirate ships would be painted blue for camouflage (*Imag.* 1.19; cf. Casson 1971, 212, n. 48).

The light, undecked galleys of the period, required regular maintenance, especially during the winter months, to remain seaworthy, as well as specialized personnel to undertake such tasks. It is thus not surprising that pirates preferred relatively small ships, which were easier to build and maintain. Piratical communities, being, most probably, small and functioning in the margins of society and in remote and poor regions like some of the small Aegean islands or Cilicia, were unable and unwilling to maintain proper galley fleets (Ormerod 1924, 14–5, 142–43). Furthermore, for communities, where piracy was a “part-time” occupation of poor farmers or mariners who had turned to it out of necessity, as Aristotle describes (*Pol.* 1256b; Gabrielsen 2013, 141; Pacheco 2020, 99), the maintenance of oared vessels was an extra burden, since, due to their lack of space that could be used to transport cargos, these ships could have no dual use as warships and merchantmen and any income supplied by them would be strictly related to warfare, raids or piracy (merchant galleys were not unknown, but they are not reported in relation to any piratical activity; Casson 1995, 117–23).

The maintenance of galleys in the ancient world was also commonly related to the construction and operation

of shipsheds and slipways, where galleys were hauled and maintained usually during the winter months (on the ancient shipsheds, see Blackman and Rankov 2013). There have been many simple, single slipways carved on the shores of various small Aegean islands or of the mainland, which could have been used by pirate communities to shelter and/or hide their vessels (their size corresponds not to triremes or larger vessels, but to smaller ships such as the ones employed by pirates; Baika 2013, 248–49) and allow for a swift launching when prey was in sight. Nevertheless, there has been no firm evidence connecting any of these naval installations with piracy and these could as well have been outpost for squadrons of small, swift coastguard vessels (*φυλακίδες νῆες* or *navis speculatoria*) that are known to have operated along the coasts in antiquity.

Another important issue related with the logistics of piratical ships was provisioning. A *hemiolia*, with a crew of 50 oarsmen, plus five other crewmembers, would require considerable daily provisions of water and food to be able to operate. Each oarsman would consume 2.1 to 6.6 liters of water per day (depending on the temperature and the amount of rowing involved) and 4,000 to 5,000 kilocalories (Dotson 1995, 219–20). It is doubtful that such a vessel could carry water for more than a couple of days in the sea due to the limited hold underneath the rowing benches, and thus would require regular stops for provisioning. Furthermore, it would not spend nights in the open sea, seeking instead shelter in protected bays and beaches (Tarn 1930, 124; Casson 1971, 89–90). Piratical ships, therefore, had a rather limited operational radius, unless they were supported by allies or managed to control their illegal activities and act as regular vessels.

One final, logistical and human resource deficiency of piratical fleets was their manning. Not only they required an experienced and trained rowing crew, which would also double as fighters, but it was a task that had to be undertaken by the fittest members of the community and, at the same time, was a rather dangerous occupation. The loss of a piratical galley at sea would mean the loss of many of the youngest and most dynamic members of the community. Taking into consideration that the coastal communities of the Aegean (at least the ones from the smaller islands and coastal settlements that were most likely to harbor piracy) were relatively small (Reger 1994, 51–5), the operation of piratical ships would have been an activity done with great caution and care, especially towards the precious tools of piracy, i.e., the ships.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief examination of the sources concerning piracy in the Classical and Hellenistic Aegean shows that the pirates of these periods tended to use small, light and swift ships for their endeavors. Their favorite ships appear to have been the *triakonter* and the *hemiolia*, which they preferred for their small size, speed and maneuverability. Smaller ships, such as the *lembos* or the *keles*, were also employed. Larger units, such as triremes or *cataphracts*, were only used in the occasion of the heyday of Cilician piracy in the early 1st century BCE, when pirates expanded their sphere of operations, along with their resources and funding, but this was a unique event. The choice of smaller vessels was not only due to their qualities concerning speed, small draft and stealthiness (Ormerod 1924, 26–8), but was also imposed by the nature of piracy, which operated in the fringes of society and states of the period, and considered relatively small communities of limited means, for which ships were precious as tools and weapons but also difficult to obtain, man and maintain. Finally, there seems to have been no type of vessel specially designed and built for or by pirates, who would adopt and use the vessels most suitable for their activities and deploy them in accordance with their needs.



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Seascapes and the Athenian Relationship with the Sea in Cult and Vase-Painting

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ABSTRACT

Iconographic patterns and themes depicting the sea and its world have a diachronic, though relatively limited, presence in Attic vase painting. At the core of these are the ship representations, often accompanied by various other features (e.g., dolphins, fish, waves) and human figures, composing aspects of seascapes in a variety of pictorial contexts. In Geometric pottery of the 8th century BCE, ships participate in multi-figured narrative scenes (e.g., warfare, departure, sailing, shipwreck) as early as the Middle Geometric II, although most of them belong to the Late Geometric I. In Protoattic pottery of the 7th century BCE, the known depictions of ships are impressively limited and do not allow the identification of specific nautical scenes. The ship representations in the 6th century BCE Attic black-figured pottery have certain common features in terms of rendering of their parts and accessories. Regardless of the vase shape and the subject of the scenes, the ships are always placed in their natural context, i.e., the sea, sometimes individually and sometimes in pairs or groups (from four to six). There are three vase shapes usually chosen for ship depictions: lebes, kylix and volute krater, in order of frequency (less often in amphorae, hydriae, oinochoai, plates). Almost all these vases are associated with the symposium and date from the last quarter of the 6th and the first twenty years of the 5th centuries BCE, apart from three earlier representations in the second quarter of the 6th century BCE. Among the numerous votive offerings in Greek sanctuaries, the evidence stands out, mainly from literary and epigraphic sources and less from archaeological finds, for the dedication of ships, whole or parts of them, and ship models on the occasion of war or trade successes. For Athens, naval victories against the Persians were the main occasion for such dedications. Moreover, the Athenians' relationship with the sea is evident in certain ritual events associated with it as part of the polis' official festivals.

In memory of an invaluable colleague and friend

when the statues fall silent / and the myths concur / the voices / vibrate [...] and suddenly reveal the eternal secrets

Nikos Engonopoulos, The Voices ("The Returns of the Birds", trans. D. Connolly, Athens, 2007).

The Acropolis of Athens is about 8 km from the bay of Phaleron, the nearest coastline where the city's harbor was located until the beginning of the 5th century BCE. The port was accessible by a broad wagon road (ἀμαξιτή ὁδός), the Phaleric Road, which more or less overlapped with today's Faliron Street. At its junction with Spyros Dontas Street, there was probably the "Alade" gate (ἄλαδε, *IG* I³ 84, lines 34–35) or eastern Phaleric gate, which designated the beginning of the course of the Phaleric wall (458/7 BCE, Thuc. 2.13.7) to the coast of Phaleron (Taxiarchi 2009; Theodoraki 2020, 42–4, 229 n. 10, 267–68). There was also a western Phaleric gate, the

so-called Southern gate, at the foot of the Muses Hill, on today's Erechtheion Street (Theocharakis 2020, 248–50). In addition to the importance of the city's first harbor, for its economic development as early as the time of Solon at the beginning of the 6th century BCE (Haas 1985), we must also consider the early presence of the maritime element in the religious life of the Athenians and its reflection on Attic vase-painting. Below, we will discuss some cultic events and various representations, showcasing the Athenian connection to the sea.

CULTIC CONNECTIONS WITH THE SEA IN ATHENIAN RELIGION

The procession called “*ἄλαδε ἑλασις*” (group walk and ride to the sea) ended in Phaleron on the third day (16th of the month Boedromion) of the Eleusinian Mysteries, comprising the ritual cleansing of the worshippers (*μύσται*) in the sea and of the piglets for slaughter brought along for the celebration. Another procession during the celebration of the Plynteria would also arrive at Phaleron, where the xoanon of Athena Polias would be washed into the sea by the washers (*λουτρίδαι*), two girls of the genus of Praxieridai (on the 25th or 26th/27th of the month Thargelion, depending on the chronological order with the Kallynteria). The xoanon was thus cleansed from any impurity, thanks to the antiseptic properties of the salt water. Ritual baths of xoana, mainly in rivers, are also known for other deities related to fertility and women across the Greek world (such as Artemis, Hera, Aphrodite). However, in Athens, the day of the Plynteria had a special significance, as it was *ἀποφράς* (unlucky, fateful), and thus with the bathing of the goddess in the sea and the return of the clean xoanon to the temple normality was restored to the city (Burkert 1977, 134, 347–48; Parker 1996, 307–8).

Near the coast of Phaleron was the sanctuary of Athena Skiras (Paus. 1.36.4; a similar one also in Salamis: Hdt. 8.94.2), which was the ending point of the Oschophoria procession (Burkert 1977, 385; Parker 1996, 309–11). This was another fertility festival, a ritual associated with the return of Theseus from Crete – apart from the connection with Dionysos and the Salaminian people. Another Attic festival, the Kybernesia (Parker 1996, 315), was indirectly connected with Theseus – as well as with Salamis – and with the foundation of two heroa in Phaleron for the captain Nausithoos and the prowman Phaiax, who were sent by the Salaminian Skiros to assist Theseus' journey to Crete (Plut. *Thes.* 17.6). It is therefore plausible that the Kybernesia was a naval celebration for the captains and crews of ships, who played an important role in the economic and military power of the city. The heroic cult of Frontis at Sounion (Parker 1996, 35) also falls into the same category, if we accept the existence of his heroon in the sanctuary of Athena in Sounion.

To conclude this brief overview, I would like to mention two ship-wagons that stand out in the cultic life of the city and emphasize its close relationship with the sea: first, the ship-cart depicted on some late black-figure skyphoi (BAPD 465, 4319, 4321; Morrison and Williams 1968, 116; Basch 1987, 227–8; Fritzilas 2006, 10, 15–8, 264), in the context of Dionysian processions and in connection with the introduction of the cult of Dionysus Eleuthereus in Athens (Burkert 1977, 166, 254, 257–58). Second, the ship-cart that carried up to a certain point the woven peplos of Athena in the procession of the Great Panathenaia to the Acropolis (Fritzilas 2006, 31; Williams 2007, 149; Wachsmann 2012). Boat races (*νηῶν ἄμιλλα*) consisting of ephebes from different tribes competing against each other became an athletic event of the Panathenaea at a much later time.

IMAGES OF SHIPS (AS WHOLE OR IN PARTS) IN ATTIC POTTERY

The ship representations on Attic Geometric vases are well known and have been studied from various iconographic and typological aspects (first by Kirk 1949; then by Morrison and Williams 1968, 12–42; Ahlberg 1971; Basch 1987, 161–87; more recently by Haug 2012, 296–307; see also Petrakova 2013, 154–55). Ships are involved in multi-figure scenes as early as Middle Geometric II (800–760 BCE), although most belong to Late Geometric I (760–735 BCE). In the few Middle Geometric examples, such as a skyphos from Eleusis (Athens, National Archaeological Museum 920: Morrison and Williams 1968, 32–3 no. Geom. 38) and a krater in New

York (MMA 34.11.2; Morrison and Williams 1968, 31–2 no. Geom. 25), the warlike character of the scenes is evident, and in addition to hoplites with shields of the Dipylon type, there are individual archers in the land and sea combats (Moore 2000). In contrast, on Late Geometric vases, ships are depicted in considerable detail, both in battle scenes (though not always as a naval battle between opposing ships) and in other neutral (i.e., non-combat) scenes in the friezes and in the space under the double handles. The latter consist of “departure scenes”, with figures boarding the stationary ship and “sailing scenes” with rowers in action and sometimes fish accompanying the ship – the rendering of the sea with wavy lines is very rare. Noteworthy is the quasi-realistic depiction of the movement of the rowers and other crew members (pulling ropes, hoisting sails), the perspective in the depiction of two rows of oarsmen and the fact that their military status is only indicated in a few cases. Because most of the vases survive only in fragments, the figure of the helmsman has not been preserved in many cases; he is discernible in a few examples, while in others it appears that he was not depicted.

Regardless of the subject depicted and the different opinions about each interpretation as realistic, mythical/epic/heroic or generalized (Haug 2012, 299: “Verhandlung männlicher Rollenbilder”), the interest and admiration for shipbuilding, the use of ships and the knowledge of navigation are undeniable (Wallinga 1993, 33–41). Ultimately, all these examples indicate the existence of various kinds of ships during the 8th century BCE (together with the know-how that this implies) and their multiple roles in the social and economic life of Athens.

In the last quarter of the 8th century BCE, ships are central to a new and unusual iconographic theme, that of the shipwreck. Although some elements are depicted, as in the Munich oinochoe (Antikensammlungen 8696; Hurwit 2011) –e.g., the castaways wear helmets, only one has survived on the overturned keel of the ship– the mythological background of the scenes remains undefined (cf. the evocative, vivid description of the final shipwreck in the *Odyssey* 12.286–290 and 12.409–417). Indeed, on the krater from Pithekoussai (Ischia, Museo Archeologico di Pithecusae; Morrison and Williams 1968, 34 no. Geom. 32; Basch 1987, 187–88), the drama of the scene is heightened by the size of the fishes and the unclear condition of survivors, though one figure is depicted swimming. These scenes offer for the first time a different perspective from that of the earlier Geometric iconography, which now relates to the dangers of navigation, caused by natural phenomena or anthropogenic factors. Thus, we have indirectly new pictorial evidence of the ever-increasing sea travel and maritime traffic of the time. At the same time, the Homeric poem is a key source of valuable information (*Od.* 5.244–260 [on shipbuilding], 2.212–213, 3.323 and 9.126–129 [on knowledge or lack of knowledge of navigation and sea routes]), attesting to the nautical experiences of the first adventurous seafarers.

In the 7th century BCE, the known depictions of ships in Protoattic pottery are impressively limited and do not allow the identification of specific maritime scenes. Interestingly, almost all of them come from sanctuaries and from the area of the later Athenian Agora (Basch 1987, 202–4; Haug 2012, 301–2, 307–8; Doronzio 2018, 20–1). In the two best preserved examples, ships are depicted quite concisely, mostly following the previous Geometric tradition, as we see on the votive pinax of the Analatos Painter from Sounion (Athens, National Archaeological Museum 14935; Morrison and Williams 1968, 73–4 no. Arch. 2; Doronzio 2018, 22; Arrington 2021, 215–16) and on the votive krater of the Checkboard Painter from the sanctuary of Heracles at Thebes (Archaeological Museum 43360; Aravantinos 2010, 146–47). On the pinax, the presence of fully armed hoplites with round shields refers to a warship, while on the krater the oarsmen sit in compartments and wear dotted clothes, and an archer is seen disembarking. In both cases, the helmsman (κυβερνήτης, captain) is depicted on a larger scale, and so are the steering oars, which are highlighted in this way. We probably have war-like scenes on a few other vase fragments with warriors in ships. Perhaps the current rarity of similar representations is accidental, as shown by the finding of two Protoattic miniature louteria with ship depictions in a child's jar burial (Arrington 2021, 138–39, fig. 4.30, pl. 9; Arrington et al. 2021, 245–48, figs. 11, 13). However, they cannot be compared with the ships depicted on the Western Greek Aristonothos' krater (Basch 1987, 233–34, fig. 482; Arrington 2021, 78–80, fig. 3.16, pl. 6), dated from the second quarter of the 7th century BCE, despite certain “Protoattic” features of the latter, or with ships on East Greek plates (Basch 1987, 241–3; Attula 2006, 116–17, pls. 60–1).



Fig. 1. Detail (ship), black-figure lebes, Exekias, Rome Villa Giulia Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia 50599 (photo by the author).

The depictions of ships in the 6th century BCE on Attic black-figure vases have certain common characteristics that will be discussed below, regardless of the type of vases and the exact subject of the representations (Morrison and Williams 1968, 84–6, 91–115; Basch 1987, 204–32; Petrakova 2013, 157–8; Münds 2017; Mackay 2022). What is also common is the setting in which they are participating, whether they are individual ships, pairs or groups of ships (their number ranges from four to six). They are always placed in their natural environment, i.e., the sea, the surface of which is indicated by continuous wavy lines that distinguish it from the ships, while the frequent depiction of fish, especially dolphins, completes the ideal image of the *seascape*. The sea is rendered as a black mass, perfectly in keeping with the “wine-dark sea” of the written sources (*οἶνοψ πόντος*, attested in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Münds 2017, 41), and is the limit to which the vase would have been filled with wine, in order to give the impression of the ships’ swaying. Matching the unstable movement of the ships was of course the instability of the drinker during the banquet, which increased as the drinking progressed.

There are three main vase shapes that display ship depictions: cauldrons (lebetes), cups and volute kraters, in order of frequency. Almost all these sympotic vessels date to the last quarter of the 6th and the first twenty years of the 5th centuries BCE, most of them towards the end of the 6th century BCE. Only two representations of Kleitias are earlier (BAPD 300000, 300740), with mythological themes and a scene on the shoulder of a hydria (probably a mythological scene too: Paris, Louvre E 735: BAPD 300789), which date to the second quarter of the 6th century BCE (570/60 BCE). Sporadic ship scenes can be found on amphoras, oinochoai, column kraters, a phiale and a plate (Münds 2017, 44; add also, BAPD 310, 2420, 5549, 9586, 10088, 9023202, 9027000).

It so happens that the earliest known lebes with a row of ships (Fig. 1) is an inscribed vase of Exekias found at Cerveteri, commissioned by an Epainetos to be donated to a certain Charops (or, according to another view, to Heracles Charops, who was worshipped in Boeotia), as can be seen from the incised inscription written before firing on the shoulder of the vase (Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia 50599: BAPD 310402; Münds 2017, 39; Rocco 2018). Perhaps the new iconographic scheme with the row of ships on the inside of the rim (here there are five), as well as the glossy all-black exterior of the vase can be attributed to the inventive Exekias, which is also true of other innovations by the same potter with regard to vase-shapes, such as the version of the type A cup (BAPD 310403; Fritzilas, this volume), perhaps the calyx krater, as well as some iconographic themes (Manakidou 2022).

Almost all ships are depicted at sea, flat and elongated (*νήες μακραί*; Morrison and Williams 1968; Morrison 1980, 14–21), with the bow and stern accentuated and often decorated with spread sails and with one or two rows of oars (*μονόκροτος*, *δίκροτος*). Of the crew, the helmsman holding the steering oar(s) stands out and is always depicted, while the oarsmen are at best depicted as black dots and are often omitted. The oars are drawn in a row in outline and their number varies from thirteen to twenty-four. Without aiming to be precise in depicting



Fig. 2. Black-figure pinax, Berlin Antikenmuseum F 831 (photo by [ArchaiOptix](#)).

a particular type of ship and depending on the number of given oars, the larger ships could be penteconters (*πεντηκόντοροι*) and the smaller triaconters (*τριακόντοροι*). From written sources, we know that these two types were also in use in other Greek cities during the 6th century BCE (Wallinga 1993, 66–102; Spartans: Hdt. 1.152.2, 1.163.2; Phocaeans: Hdt. 1.164.3; Battus from Thera sailing to Cyrene: Hdt. 4.156.2). The same applies to the trireme, which was the invention of the Corinthian shipbuilder Ameinocles (Thuc. 1.13.2–3) at the end of the 8th century BCE, when he built four warships for Samos. In the same passage, Thucydides mentions that the Corinthians with their fleet cleared up piracy and thus their city gained large profit as a hub of land and sea trade, becoming very powerful. However, depictions of ships in Corinthian vases are very few and appear mainly in some black-figure pinakes from Penteskoufia (Fig. 2) dedicated to Poseidon (Morrison and Williams 1968, 87–9; Basch 1987, 234–9; Palmieri 2009; Hasaki and Nakas 2017), at a time when the production of pictorial pottery at Corinth was beginning to gradually decline under the predominance of Attic painted vases.

Herodotus mentions a lot about the naval power of Samos during the tyranny of Polycrates, and Thucydides reports that the Ionians followed the development of the navy during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses (Hdt. 3.39.3–4, 3.122.2; Thuc. 1.14.2 on Polycrates and Phocaeans who defeated Carthaginians in a naval battle). He further narrates that, only shortly before the expansion of the Persians, the Sicilian tyrants and the Korkyraeans acquired triremes (*τρίηρεις*) in large numbers; these were the most powerful fleets in Greece before Xerxes' campaign (Thuc. 1.14.3). The Aeginetans and the Athenians, and perhaps some other cities-states, had small fleets, and most of their ships were equipped with fifty oars. Only later, when the Athenians clashed with the



Fig. 3. Black-figure lebes, Manner of Antimenes Painter, Malibu, J.P. Getty Museum 92.AE.88.

Aeginetans and the danger of a Persian invasion was removed, did Themistocles persuade them to create a fleet (Wallinga 1993, 148–64).

Although most Attic black-figure vases depict warships (only three examples with trade ships are known), there are no examples of triremes. Their *tropis* (τρόπις, the ship's keel) ends on the bow in a ram, which is most often in the form of a boar's head and rarely a dolphin's head, while apotropaic eyes may be depicted to the sides of the prow (Carlson 2009). The rudders are visible at the stern and the *aphlaston* (ἄφλαστον, the upward curved end of the stern with figure-shaped decoration) has the shape of a bird (or swan). A few representations on cups show the ladder (or ladders) of the ship. Only one cup (by Nikosthenes potter, Paris, Louvre F 123: BAPD 301239) depicts two ships in full sail side by side. Also, in addition to the helmsmen with their steering oars, we see the bow officer (πρωρεύς) standing behind the stem post. However, the depiction of hoplites together with ships is rare. In one case we have the unusual scene of four naked bearded men who have folded the sail and have tied it with red bands, while another younger man with himation stands nearby (cup Heidelberg University 25.8: BAPD 2178).

Most black-figure representations on cauldrons (lebetes) and volute kraters are attributed to the Antimenes Painter and his workshop (Fig. 3; BAPD 5166, 10090, 19547, 30701, 30975, 320144, 320211, 320212, 340494, 9025825, 9026113) and to painters of the Leagros and Golvol Groups (BAPD 579), while the cups are associated with the Leagros Group, the workshop of Nikosthenes and the Lysippides Painter (BAPD 479, 275113, 230722, 302377, 320001, 9050808). All the above date to the last quarter of the 6th century BCE, testifying the predominance of ship depictions in friezes inside the rim of the vases and to the preference of potters and buyers –especially from the aristocratic elite– for this iconographic theme during that period. According to Mackay's assumption (2022, 223–26), the increased interest in this kind of vase scenes was perhaps partly due to Peisistratos' nautical exploits

A volute krater and a band cup with representations of ships (Fig. 4) are of particular interest, as they were found together as grave gifts in a tomb in the cemetery of ancient Thera in Sellada (Thera, Archaeological Museum 1773, 1774: BAPD 5049, 5405; Münds 2017, 41–2, fig. 1). These two vases form a kind of “symposium



Fig. 4. Detail (ship), black-figure volute krater, Thera Archaeological Museum 1774 (photo by the author).



Fig. 5. “Bilingual” cup, London, [British Museum 1843,1103.29 \(E 2\)](#).

set”, both in terms of use and iconography. Both bear the name of their owner (incised inscription: *Τιμόστενος*), while on both vases the pictorial scenes reflect the interests, social status and perhaps the occupation of the deceased with the sea. Among the most impressive depictions of seascapes in Attic vase-painting are those occupying the interior of cups (Fig. 5), where, in addition to the frieze of ships, there is the possibility that the subject chosen for the tondo of the cup may also have a connection with the world of the sea, such as Poseidon on a seahorse (Paris, Louvre F 145: *BAPD* 4390), or the same god battling with the Giant Polybotes (see above, cup from Thera). The tondo scene may also be related to the symposium, as in some “bilingual” cups with youths carrying pointed amphoras (Fig. 5; London, British Museum E 2: *BAPD* 202287).



Fig. 6. Black-figure cup, London, British Museum 1867.0508.963 (B 436).

The best-known representation with a pirate warship (ἡμιόλια; Casson 1958) and a merchant ship (στρογγύλη ναῦς, ὀλκάς; Morrison 1980, 51–8) is found on a late black-figure cup (London, British Museum B 436: *BAPD* 479). It is worth mentioning some interesting details, such as the fact that the sail of one ship is spread out and the other is furled (Fig. 6), and that the warship has two rows of oars with different number of rowers on one side and four sailors engaged in unfurling the sail (Basch 1987, 222–24). Also, visible under one handle is the forward half of another ship with an eye depicted on the bow.

Mythological scenes with ships (Fig. 7), and perhaps a few of daily life, do not appear often on Attic vases until the late 6th century BCE (Neckamphora, Mannheim, Reiss-Engelhorn Museum CG 343: *BAPD* 11; Neckamphora Daybreak Painter, London, British Museum B 240: *BAPD* 5; Oinochoe Keyside Class, London, British Museum B 508: *BAPD* 303254), except for the three earlier ones from before the mid-6th century BCE, which I mentioned above. Another interesting case is the depiction of the prow as shield device (ἐπίσημα) on hoplite shields, one of the many iconographic motifs chosen for the decoration of round shields on vases.

In Attic vase-painting of the 5th century BCE, scenes from the world of the sea are few and far between. A few marine creatures are depicted as secondary elements, mainly dolphins and fish (more rarely Tritons, seahorses), designating the seascape, occasionally accompanied by chariots of astral deities flying over the sea (*BAPD* 223, 13479, 206531, 212985, 213417, 213469, 361416, 43179). On red-figure vases, depictions of ships are very rare and limited to certain mythological scenes. In these cases, usually only the bow or stern of the ship is depicted as “part taken for the whole” (*pars pro toto*). The only known representation of a whole ship is on a Late Archaic red-figure stamnos of the Siren Painter with Odysseus and the Sirens, where the sea is indicated as a uniform mass with diluted paint (Fig. 8; London, British Museum E 440: *BAPD* 202628). The same rendering of the sea is found on the other side, as three Erotes fly over it.

On some red-figure vases the *aphlaston* is depicted in the hands of Athena or Nike and then it is obvious that the maritime power and the naval victories of the city are implied. Indeed, all relevant representations date to the second quarter of the 5th century BCE, in the aftermath of the Persian Wars (Miller 1997, 33, 39). The presence of statuary types of these two deities holding the *aphlaston* –sometimes also a mast and a yardarm or Nike on a ship’s prow (Fig. 9)– on late red-figure vases (bell krater Nikias Painter: *BAPD* 217479) and late Panathenaic amphoras (Williams 2007, 148–49; e.g., *BAPD* 303133, 303151, 303155, 303156, 303159, 303162, 303166, 303167, 9033910) indicates their association in the collective memory with successes at sea (e.g., against the pirates in the Aegean in the years of Lycurgus’ tenure, 338–326 BCE) that were the hallmark of Athenian state policy.

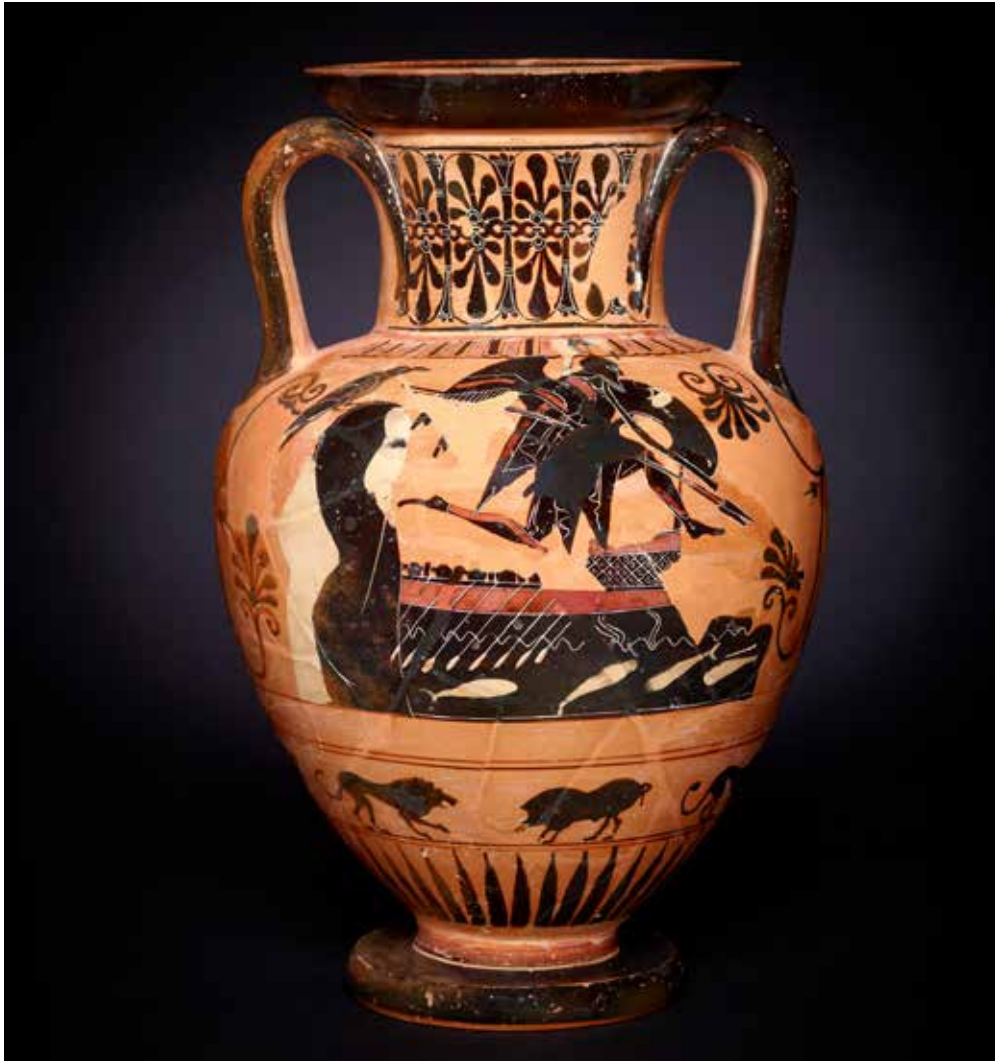


Fig. 7. Black-figure neck amphora, Daybreak Painter, London, [British Museum 1848,0619.2 \(B 240\)](#).

SHIPS AS VOTIVE OFFERINGS OF THE ATHENIANS

From literary and epigraphic sources mainly, and less so from archaeological material, we know of ship dedications, whole or parts of them, as well as ship models, on war or commercial successes on collective and individual level (Frielinghaus 2017). Small ship models, of clay, bronze or wood, are not so common votive offerings (e.g., bronze lamp in the form of a ship from the Erechtheion, with the inscription “sacred for Athena”: Basch 1987, 228–30; Wachsmann 2012, 248–55), although some have been found in sanctuaries of various deities other than Poseidon (such as Hera at Samos and Perachora, Aphaia at Aegina, Apollo at Corinth, Pelops at Olympia and elsewhere; Frielinghaus 2017, 32–3). Offerings also include depictions of ships on votive pinakes, mainly painted and more rarely in relief (such as the trireme on the “Lenormant” votive relief, found near the Erechtheion; Athens, Acropolis Museum 1339: Morrison and Williams 1968, 170–72; Pritchard 2021, 412–15). On the contrary, in the Hellenistic period there is more evidence and there are many depictions of ships, both in monumental form and on various categories of objects (statues and reliefs, coins, jewelry etc.).

A rare offering in the Greek sanctuaries were the warships themselves, which were dedicated in the Archaic and Classical period as “victory ships” (*νικητήρια*), i.e., they were keepsakes of naval victories (Frielinghaus 2017, 24). The difficulty in transporting and finding a suitable place, as well as in protecting and maintaining these vessels, made of delicate and perishable materials, were decisive factors in the limited presence of actual



Fig. 8. Red-figure stamnos, Siren Painter, London, [British Museum 1843.1103.31 \(E 440\)](#).

ships in the sanctuaries. In every respect, the keeping of a captured ship as a war booty was something very special. We know from written sources that among the various *ἀκροθίνια* (*ἀκροθίνιον*: the topmost part of the heap and offered to the gods, first-fruits), dedicated by the Greeks after the naval battle of Salamis, were three Phoenician triremes as spoils and monuments of war victory (Hdt. 8.121.1; Kourta 2021, 70, 130 O12, 161 Φ55): One ship was dedicated to the sanctuary of Poseidon at Sounion, another to Poseidon's sanctuary at Isthmia, and the third to the sanctuary of Ajax at Salamis. It is no coincidence that Phoenician ships were also depicted by Polygnotus in his monumental painting of the Battle of Marathon, which was displayed in the Poikile Stoa at the Athenian Agora (Paus. 1.15.3). On similar occasions, the Athenians after their victory in the naval battle of Naupactus in 429 BCE, followed one year later by the Spartans for another victory, dedicated a trireme (Fig. 10) to the sanctuary of Poseidon at cape Rion, along with a trophy (Thuc. 2.84.4, 2.92.5; Kourta 2021, 70, 161 Φ56–57).

More often, however, various parts of ships, mainly *ἀκρωτήρια* or *ἄκρα κοσμήματα* (i.e., *aphlasta*, *akroprora*) and rams, are mentioned as the most common offerings in commemoration of a naval victory (Frielinghaus 2017, 24–5). This custom was old and quite widespread in Greece, according to written sources. Pausanias (1.40.5) mentions that the Megarians dedicated a bronze ram to the temple of Zeus in Megara, for their victory over the Athenians in the early 6th century BCE during the naval battle near Salamis (Kourta 2021, 161 Φ58). Also, the Aeginetans entrusted *akroteria* of ships to the sanctuary of Aphaia after their naval victory over the Samians towards the end of the 6th century BCE, as Herodotus mentions (Hdt. 3.59.3; Kourta 2021, 71 n. 451, 161 Φ59). For the Aeginetans, who led the naval battle of Salamis, Apollo himself demanded that they make a special tribute to Delphi and they commissioned a bronze mast bearing three golden stars (Hdt. 8.122.1; Kourta 2021, 71, 131 O17, 162 Φ60).



Fig. 9. Panathenaic amphora, London, [British Museum 1873.0820.370 \(B 610\)](#).

As we can see, it is interesting that the votive offerings for naval victories were not only dedicated to sanctuaries of Poseidon, but also to sanctuaries of Zeus (mainly in Olympia), Athena (on the Athenian Acropolis) and Apollo



Fig. 10. Model of a trireme, Munich, [Deutsches Museum](#).

(at Delphi). In fact, for a statue of Apollo, which was a panhellenic tribute on the initiative of Themistocles after the victories at Artemision and Salamis, Herodotus mentions that the god held an *ἀκρόπρωρον* in one hand (Hdt. 8.121.2; Kourta 2021, 35, 118 Π7, 152 Φ24) and, according to the oracle recorded by Pausanias for the same statue (10.14.5), this must have come from a Persian ship (Kourta 2021, 151–52 Φ22).

We know of other statues of Apollo being commissioned at Delphi for naval victories, although we have no further information about their appearance (Kourta 2021, 35–6). This was the case for the Massaliotes regarding their victory in a naval battle against the Carthaginians (around the middle of the 6th century BCE), the Peparethians for the capture of two Carian ships, apparently during the Persian wars (first quarter of the 5th century BCE, since the Carians were allies of the Persians and major ship-suppliers to the royal fleet) and the Epidaurians, who contributed substantially with their ships to the naval battles against the Persians and to land battles. Also, the Athenian trireme commander Lycomedes, the first to capture a Persian ship, dedicated the ship's "ensigns" (*παράσημα*), perhaps a kind of emblems, to the sanctuary of Apollo Daphnephorus at Phlya (Plut. *Them.* 15.3).

Indicative of the dedication of similar monuments from the entire city is the inscription on the stylobate in the Stoa of the Athenians at Delphi: "Ἀθηναῖοι ἀνέθεσαν τὸν στοᾶν καὶ τὰ ἡόπ[α] καὶ τὰ κροτέρια ἑλόντες τὸν πολε[μίου]" (Syll.³ 29; see also Paus. 10.11.6; Kourta 2021, 116 A17, 150 Φ16, 163 E2; Fig. 11). In addition to the stoa (Kourta 2021, 27, 75), these are spoils dedicated by the Athenians after the triumphal battle at Mykale and the capture of Sestos (479/8 BCE); the word *ὄπλα* (Kourta 2021, 28, 72, 132 O18a) has been interpreted as ropes of ships or floating bridges that Xerxes had built over Hellespont, while the word "*ἀκρωτήρια*" as the figure-heads (*aphlasta* or *akroprora*) of enemy ships: "They are also dedicated the figure-heads of ships and bronze shields" (Paus. 10.11.6, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Cambridge, Mass., 1935). Some scholars assume that the construction of the Athenian stoa is related to the victory at the river Eurymedon (470/69 BCE, also a double victory there, in land and sea) and that it was part of Pericles' building program (i.e., after 456 BCE).

Regardless of which victory we accept as the occasion for the dedication of the Stoa of the Athenians and the discussion on the date of its erection, with this monumental tribute to the Panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi and with the foundation of the First Delian League (478/7 BCE), Athens asserted its political power and naval dominance in the Aegean *φόβῳ ῥοθίου καὶ νεῶν δεινότητος*, i.e., "through fear of the splashing oars and of the



Fig. 11. Stoa of the Athenians at Delphi (photo by [B. Werner](#)).

awe-inspiring sight of ships bearing down” (Thuc. 4.10.5, trans. C.F. Smith, Cambridge, Mass., 1920).



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Tyrrhenian Pirates and Dionysus

The Iconography of an Ancient Story of Piracy

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines, through selected monuments from the Archaic to the Roman era, the iconography of the myth of the abduction of Dionysus by Tyrrhenian pirates. The Homeric Hymn to Dionysus refers to the abduction of the god by the pirates and their punishment for this lawless act because they tried by force to keep him as their captive. Tyrrhenian pirates, identified by modern researchers with the Etruscans who lived in Italy or the inhabitants of Lemnos, considered him the son of a king and captured him to demand a ransom from his parents. Through a series of miracles based on symbols of his religion, Dionysus completed the circle of his revenge by transforming the impious pirates into dolphins. The story of the Tyrrhenian pirates allowed Greek and Roman writers and artists to present their version of this episode. The pirate ship at sea and its crew play a central role in the pictorial renderings of the subject. By studying this mythological episode, the plausible elements and historical ramifications are sought in relation to the phenomenon of piracy, as it exerted a timeless effect on ancient art and religion, each time allowing imagination and faith to provide distinct approaches to oral or visual narratives.

*In memory of Prof. Panos Valavanis,
in tribute to his pioneering and influential contributions in the study of the ancient Greek world,
and for his trust and generous guidance.*

INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean Sea was the first broad geographic area, where piracy took on the features of a mass phenomenon. As a means to acquiring material wealth and slaves, it was utilized by almost all the peoples that settled on its shores during antiquity: the Sea Peoples, the Tyrrhenian marauders, but also the Greeks, who, along with classical civilization, produced some of the most fearsome pirates in the known world. An interesting composition of reality and fiction may be observed in the myth of Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian pirates, which is commonly found both in ancient literature and in the pictorial arts.

The story of Dionysus is full of journeys and peregrinations to spread his cult, and cruel treatment meted out in irrational fury to those who opposed it, as was the case with Lycurgus, king of Thrace, Pentheus, king of Thebes, as well as the Tyrrhenian pirates. Notwithstanding the diversity of the modern theories governing research into myths, there is often a historical reality that triggers each myth, however abstract and fanciful its plot may be. Therefore, it is often possible to look for chronological limits and geographical boundaries within the evolution of the myth.

THE TYRRHENIANS: THE ETHNIC NAME AND THEIR PLACE

The name Tyrrhenian Sea is attributed to that part of the Mediterranean, which is off the southwestern coast of Italy and all the way to Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily. The ethnic name *Tyrrhenoi* (Tyrrhenians) was used by the ancient Greeks to denote non-Greeks in general and pirate people in particular (*LIMC* 8:154–5, s.v. Tyrsenoi). In ancient written sources, the term “Tyrrhenian” is found for the first time in the end of Hesiod’s *Theogony*:

And Circe the daughter of Helius, Hyperion’s son, loved steadfast Odysseus and bore Agrius and Latinus who was faultless and strong: also she brought forth Telegonus by the will of golden Aphrodite. And they ruled over the famous Tyrsenians, very far off in a recess of the holy islands (Hes. *Theog.* 1011–1016, trans. H.G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge, Mass., 1914).

In Attic Greek, they occur as *Τυρρῆνοι* (Turrhēnoi), in Ionian as *Τυρσηνοί* (Tursēnoi), and in the Doric dialect as *Τυρσανοί* (Tursānoi) (*LSJ*, s.v. Τυρσηνός).

The term *Tyrrhenoi* is also used in Greek to refer to the Etruscans. The ancient Greeks used the place name “Tyrrhenia” to denote the land of the Etruscans on the western shores of the central part of the Italian peninsula. According to Strabo (e.g., 2.1.40, 2.5.19, 2.5.29) and Ptolemaeus (*Geog.* 3.1.1), the term *Tyrrhenian Sea* was related only to the middle part of this broader maritime region, as opposed to its northern (Λιγυστικόν, i.e., the Ligurian Sea) and southern (Σικελικόν, i.e., the Sicilian Sea) parts. The Etruscans or Tyrrhenians were an ancient people, who lived in a land called *Etruria* by the Romans or *Tyrrhenia* by the Greeks. They developed an impressive civilization of some significance, especially from the 8th century BCE onwards.

PRESENCE OF THE TYRRHENIANS IN THE AEGEAN

According to the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, which is discussed in more detail below, Tyrrhenians pirates wanted to take Dionysus away from the Greek world and sell him to barbarians who lived either in the west or northwest (Hyperboreans), the south (Egypt) or the east (Cyprus). In Euripides’ *Cyclops* (10–22), Sicily is mentioned as the area of operations of these marauders from Tyrrhenia (γένος Τυρσηνικόν / ληστῶν). The presence of Tyrrhenians in the Aegean is also attested to by several written sources. Thucydides (4.109.4) reports that in the old days the Tyrrhenians lived in both Athens and Lemnos. Myrsilus of Methymna, a 3rd-century BCE author, states that the Tyrrhenians were originally from Italy, but they had migrated to the Aegean region, and ever since that time they became known as Pelasgians (*FGrHist* 477 F8–9). In the 1st century CE, Dionysius Halicarnassensis (*Ant. Rom.* 1.28.1–4) claimed that the Tyrrhenians were not of Pelasgian origin, but lived in Italy instead (Kobakhidze 2008, 74–7).

The island of Lemnos has become the focus of numerous debates and arguments ever since the discovery of the famous inscribed stele of Kaminia in 1884, which depicts a warrior holding a spear. The stele has two long texts incised on the front face (around the figure of the warrior) and on one of its narrower sides, written in Greek letters but in a non-Greek language, most probably closely related to Etruscan (Lehr 1942–1945; Di Cesare 2024). Herodotus considered the inhabitants of Lemnos to be Pelasgians (e.g., 4.415.2–5, 5.26.1). The same author informs us that the Pelasgians of Mountain Hymettos, who, driven away by the Achaeans, settled on Lemnos, other islands of the Aegean and the shores of Asia Minor (*Hdt.* 6.136.2–140.2), were called Tyrrhenians (*Hdt.* 1.57.1–3).

The Tyrrhenians of Lemnos, who were directly related to the Pelasgian Tyrrhenians, must have migrated to the north Aegean region at the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE (De Simone 1996, 39–84). They rapidly evolved into a great maritime power and are rightly credited with being the first to use the naval ram. Sources after the 5th century BCE refer to the inhabitants of Lemnos as “Tyrrhenians”. Numerous pieces of evidence,

combined with Thucydides' testimony, lead to the plausible conclusion that the Tyrrhenians mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn* may also include the inhabitants of Lemnos (see Greco 2010, 3–180). One cannot, however, ignore the reputation of the Tyrrhenians of the west, i.e., the Etruscans, as pirates (Sassatelli 2004). It is not improbable that Etruscan merchants had settled on Lemnos and occasionally engaged in piracy. From the 5th century BCE onwards, Lemnos was considered to be a possession of Athens; this might explain the Athenian interest in the myth of the transformation of the Tyrrhenian marauders and, possibly, hint at its Attic provenance (Chudziński 1886, 9).

TYRRHENIAN PIRACY

Despite the great civilization of the Tyrrhenians, the ancient Greek written sources refer mainly to their intense pirate activity (e.g., *IG II*² 1629, line 223; *IG XI.2* 148, line 73; *Syll.*³ 1225, line 8; Diod. Sic. 15.14.3; Strabo 5.2.2, 10.4.9; Aristid. *Or.* 44.570). One of the better-known Tyrrhenian pirates was Postumius, who went raiding at the head of a flotilla of twelve pirate ships in the 4th century BCE and was captured in Sicily. Timoleon, the Corinthian general and politician who was sent to Sicily to rid the local Greeks of tyrants and Carthaginians, executed Postumius, whose raids had been playing havoc with the local sea lanes of communication:

Timoleon himself seized and put to death Postumius the Etruscan, who had been raiding sea traffic with twelve corsairs, and had put in at Syracuse as a friendly city (Diod. Sic. 16.82.3, trans. C.H. Oldfather, Cambridge, Mass., 1954).

However, the Tyrrhenian pirates are mainly associated with the well-known myth of Dionysus, both in ancient written sources and in the arts (e.g., James 1975; Paleothodoros 2012).

THE MYTH OF DIONYSUS AND THE TYRRHENIAN PIRATES IN THE ANCIENT WRITTEN SOURCES

The myth of the abduction of Dionysus by the Tyrrhenian pirates is mainly known from three ancient written sources: the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (3.564–691) and the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus (31.86–91, 44.231–252, 45.105–168). Brief references to the myth may also be found in Euripides (*Cyc.* 10–22), Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.5.3), Hyginus (*Fab.* 134), Seneca (*Oed.* 449–466) and Philostratus the Elder (*Imag.* 1.19). Oppian also mentions the transformation of men into dolphins by Dionysus (*Halieutica* 1.650).

The earliest hint of the Dionysiac myth with the Tyrrhenian pirates may be traced to the Late Archaic period. The first reference to the appearance of the Tyrrhenian pirates is in the seventh dithyramb of the *Homeric Hymns*, which is dedicated to Dionysus, probably dating from the late 6th or early 5th century BCE:

Presently there came swiftly over the sparkling sea Tyrsenian pirates on a well-decked ship — a miserable doom led them on. When they saw him, they made signs to one another and sprang out quickly, and seizing him straightway, put him on board their ship exultingly (*Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 6–10, trans. H.G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge, Mass., 1914).

According to Apollodorus, mythographer of the 2nd century BCE, when Dionysus decided to sail from Ikaria to Naxos, with the aim of initiating the local inhabitants into his cult, he chartered a Tyrrhenian pirate ship (*Τυρρηνῶν ληστρικὴν τριήρη*) to ferry him to the island (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.3). The Tyrrhenians accepted, but their ulterior motive was to sell him into slavery in Asia (Romizzi 2003, 352 n. 1; Emilio-Ioannidou 2017,



Fig. 1. Ancient Etruscan kalpis attributed to The Painter of Vatican 238. Formerly in the Toledo Museum of Art (inv. no. 82.134), now repatriated to Italy (photo by M. Daniels, courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art, January 1992).

140). When Dionysus became aware of the plot, he transformed their oars into serpents, filled the ship with ivy, immobilized it in its wreaths, and made invisible flutes sound. The pirates lost their minds and dove into the sea, where they were transformed into dolphins:

And wishing to be ferried across from Ikaria to Naxos he hired a pirate ship of Tyrrhenians. But when they had put him on board, they sailed past Naxos and made for Asia, intending to sell him. Howbeit, he turned the mast and oars into snakes, and filled the vessel with ivy and the sound of flutes. And the pirates went mad, and leaped into the sea, and were turned into dolphins (Apollod. Bibl. 3.5.3, trans. J.G. Frazer, Cambridge, Mass., 1921).

THE MYTH OF DIONYSUS AND THE TYRRHENIAN PIRATES IN THE ANCIENT ARTS

The most significant depiction of the myth of the Tyrrhenian pirates in south Italian vase-painting appears on a Late Archaic black-figure Etruscan *kalpis*, formerly in the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (inv. no. 82.134) and now repatriated to Italy (Fig. 1). It is attributed to The Painter of Vatican 238, a follower of the Micali Painter



Fig. 2. The so-called “Dionysus Cup” by Exekias, ca. 540/530 BCE. Attic black-figure kylix; from Vulci. München Staatliche Antikensammlungen, inv. no. 8729 (photo by [M. Kabel](#)).

(Rassmusen and Spivey 1986, 2–8). The main subject is painted on the body: six pirates are transformed into dolphins as they dive into the sea, which is rendered with a running counterclockwise spiral. The figure on the left is human from the waist up, while its lower part is a dolphin’s tail. All other figures of pirates in the process of transformation have human legs and the torso of a dolphin. This detail may be interpreted more as the depiction of two different types of metamorphosis, one beginning at the legs, the other at the head. The figure at the far right has its legs bent and overlapping with those of the figure to its left. All other figures have their human legs bent at various angles, which, as modern researchers have correctly observed, may be taken as an attempt on the part of the vase-painter to portray different snapshots of the pirates falling into the sea. An ivy stem is visible along the left edge of the panel, possibly an indication of the presence of Dionysus. In any event, this *kalpis* is the earliest illustration of the myth in Italy depicting the transformation of the Tyrrhenian pirates into dolphins (Paleothodoros 2012, 459–60).

The myth of the Tyrrhenian pirates, as described in the *Homeric Hymn*, has been associated by modern research with the scene painted in the *tondo* of the *kylix* of Exekias in Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen (inv. no. 8729), depicting Dionysus sailing the seas (ABV 146.21; BAPD 310403; Isler-Kerényi 2007, figs 104–7; Paleothodoros 2012, 462–4, fig. 51). The god is lying within the ship, much like a symposiast, holding a cornucopia in his right hand, while dolphins are dancing all around (Fig. 2). Four dolphins follow along the course of the ship, while three others move in the opposite direction. Research has shown that the Munich cup by Exekias illustrates the myth of the Tyrrhenian pirates, since the god is clearly associated with the dolphins. This association is further enhanced by the presence of a small white dolphin in the bow, as well as in the stern of the ship. Images of Dionysus sailing the seas, whether accompanied by dolphins or not, also appear on other vases painted in the late black-figure style, some of which have been commented upon in detail by Paleothodoros (2012, 463–5).



Figs. 3a–b. Details of the frieze from the Lysikrates choragic monument (fig. 3a: photo by [G.E. Koronaio](#)s, fig. 3b: photo by [G.E. Koronaio](#)s).

The next notable representation of the Tyrrhenians pirates may be found in an Attic monument of the second half of the 4th century BCE. We refer to the contiguous frieze in the well-known choregic monument of Lysikrates (334 BCE), above the architrave of which there is a relief sculpture depicting the clash between Dionysus' retinue and the pirates who attempted to capture the god, before he turned them into dolphins (Erhard 1993, 10–11, figs. 1–4; Figs. 3a–b). It is the best-preserved choregic monument of antiquity, situated on the



Fig. 4. Young Dionysus transforming Tyrrhenian pirates into dolphins. Mosaic from a Roman villa. Bardo National Museum, Tunis (photo by [DrRachT](#)).

ancient “Street of the tripods”, and was erected in 335/334 BCE, during the archonship of Euaenetus, in order to carry on its top the bronze tripod that would have been awarded as a prize for victory in the dramatic contest (Ridgway 2001, 15–8, figs. 1–3).

It may plausibly be deduced that the subject of the frieze of the choregic monument derives from a dramatic performance, for which Lysikrates won the tripod. The story is the transformation of the men into dolphins in the presence of Dionysus and his entourage. The artistic requirements have modified the myth to a significant degree. The incident takes place not in a ship, but on the shore. To be sure, the vignettes differ from the myth as presented in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*. Dionysus is depicted on the frieze in the shape of a man, not in that of a lion, as in the hymn. He is shown not aboard a ship, but sitting on a rock by the sea, next to a panther. The satyrs of the *thiasos* celebrate over a *krater* of wine, when they are attacked by the unsuspecting pirates, who expect to collect a ransom in exchange for the god. In other parts of the frieze, the satyrs react to the assault. They hold down the pirates, beating them with *thyrsi*. A satyr brandishes a thyrsus to strike at a prostrate marauder. Another satyr raises his arm in supplication, while a third one chases after a terrified pirate. Some marauders have survived and jump into the sea, where they turn into dolphins, beginning with the head, while the transformation has not yet reached their torsos and limbs. Other pirates dive into the sea, almost completely transformed into dolphins (Erhard 1993, 16–37, pls. 1–19).

The frieze records the Dionysiac episode on a monument that was erected on the occasion of a dramatic contest, possibly a satyr play. The satyrs who chase the pirates punish them in various ways, tying their hands behind their backs as captives. They probably represent the chorus of actors sponsored by Lysikrates. Other landscape features, such as rocks, trees and large craters, are interspersed between the human figures, delineating the conventional boundaries between the land and the sea. Given the limited height of the frieze, one cannot comment upon the rendering of the Tyrrhenian pirates’ facial features and expressions. Their muscle structure is conveyed with very little in the way of details, in a somewhat impressionistic fashion. What we have here is a frieze that belongs to a choregic monument, i.e., not a public project, but an offering by a private citizen on the occasion of a theatrical play.

Among Roman art works depicting Dionysus on a ship and the transformation of the pirates into dolphins, we may mention the excellent 3rd-century CE mosaic pavement from Thugga (modern Dougga), Tunisia, preserved in the National Bardo Museum (Yacoub 1995, 173–4; Fig. 4). It is depicted the warship with Dionysus and Tyrrhenian pirates sailing in sea. Portrayed as an adolescent, the god is accompanied by an elderly Silenus. Two pirates, terrorized by the god, are already in the water, turning into dolphins. One is being snatched by the foot by a leopard, which appears ready to devour him. Two small boats are on either side of the divine ship. One of them is carrying three men, probably fishermen, and the other a couple of Cupids.



Fig. 5. Part of the Filarete Door at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome with the bas-relief depicting Dionysus and the pirates (photo by <https://stpetersbasilica.info/Interior/DoorFilarete/DoorFilarete.htm>).

The mosaic in question recalls a description by Philostratus the Elder (*Imag.* 1.19) of an ancient Greek painting at Neapolis (Naples), which depicts a Tyrrhenian pirate vessel attacking a sacred ship of Dionysus and his Maenads. The transformation has already begun and the god's ship is covered in ivy and vines. The introduction of a naval battle motif is obviously a later invention, when the myth was incorporated into other tales that recounted Dionysus' warlike mien.

THE MYTH OF DIONYSUS AND THE TYRRHENIAN PIRATES IN EARLY MODERN AND MODERN ARTS

The Dionysiac myth remained popular after the end of antiquity and up to modern times. A bas-relief depicting Dionysus' ship and the punishment of the pirates adorns the main bronze door of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome (Suffi 1998, 26–31; Glass 2012, 549; Fig. 5); the subject is based on an episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (3.656–691). It was commissioned for the Old Basilica by Pope Eugene IV (1431–1447) and created by the Florentine sculptor Antonio di Pietro Averlino (ca. 1400 – ca. 1469), better known as "il Filarete". The Filarete Door is the oldest one in the basilica. It was preserved and reused in the New Basilica in 1619. The two door panels are made of bronze and decorated with scenes in bas-relief. The depiction of the ship carrying Dionysus and the pirates may be found in one of the smaller bas-reliefs carved between the six main panels that are decorated with scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Aesop's Fables and other subjects pertaining to the life of Eugene IV.



Fig. 6. Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian pirates. Jacob Matham, after David Vinckboons, 1616. Engraving. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. [RP-P-OB-102.850](#).

Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian pirates form the subject of an engraving from the year 1616, now preserved in Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-OB-102.850; Matham 2007, 279, no. 284; Fig. 6). The Tyrrhenian pirates have been transformed into dolphins: when Bacchus turns himself into a lion and a vine stretches around the ship, the Tyrrhenians, panic-stricken, jump into the sea and are transformed into monstrous dolphins. The same subject also appears in a medieval edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, published by Veuve Langelier in 1619, which is preserved in the National Library of France in Paris.

The transformation of Dionysus before the Tyrrhenian pirates was a subject that also inspired modern painters and artists, as evident in the work of London-born painter and sculptor Glyn Warren Philpot, who later became a representative of the Art Deco style. In the oil painting in question (1924), Philpot portrays the god Dionysus, an upside-down pirate and some dolphins in the sea in the background (Fig. 7). The foregoing brief story of the Tyrrhenians and Dionysus has provided artists throughout the ages, from the time of Homer to the twentieth century, with the opportunity to present their own artistic version.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The sources refer to the Tyrrhenians as violent, brutal kidnappers with a rapacious attitude. The marauders served as the model of an impious and uncivilized nature, given the fact that their cruelty was proverbial. Aristotle may be the earliest surviving source that refers to the infamous “Tyrrhenian torture”, the practice of chaining rotting corpses together with live captives, face to face, limb to limb, one by one as precisely as possible (Beatrice 2001). To those who referred indirectly to Aristotle's passage in the Roman period, the “Tyrrhenian torture” was a genuine Etruscan custom (Paleothodoros 2012, 470). Tyrrhenians pirates were infamous for tying live captives to dead ones (Nonnus, *Dion.* 45.110). It is possible that their proverbially harsh and rigid character became the ideal target for bringing to fruition another one of Dionysus' divine plans, so that he may eventually have his revenge, as he usually did with the opponents of his cult.



Fig. 7. The transformation of Dionysus before the Tyrrhenian pirates by Glyn Warren Philpot (1924). Oil on canvas. Private collection (Delaney 1999, pl. 15).

Dionysus' victims were transformed into dolphins, because these mammals were considered to have a lot in common with humans. In the first half of the 5th century BCE, a fragment of Pindar refers to the human nature of dolphins, that loveable companion of ships, piratical or otherwise, in Mediterranean waters and beyond (Pind. fr. 234; see also fr. 140b.13–17, 236). In Lucian's *Dialogues of the Sea Gods*, intelligent dolphins are shown conversing with Poseidon, god of the seas, and express remorse for their transgressions as they accompany sailors or pirates in their voyages and assist them when they are shipwrecked, stating:

Don't be surprised, Poseidon, that we're kind to men. We were men ourselves, before we became fishes
(Luc. *Dial. mar.* 8, trans. M.D. MacLeod, Cambridge, Mass., 1961).



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Between Myth, Lore and Historical Reality

Piracy in the Phournoi Archipelago, Eastern Aegean

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ABSTRACT

The documentation pertaining to a considerable array of ancient, medieval and modern shipwrecks unearthed during the recent investigations (2015–2020) conducted by the Ephorate of Maritime Antiquities in the Phournoi archipelago has rekindled a long-standing public perception, portraying Phournoi as a historical hub for piracy. This paper delves into the distinctive geomorphological features and coastal formations of Phournoi, elucidating the navigational advantages it afforded and its association with piracy. It scrutinizes local toponyms, historical accounts and the archaeological remnants of approximately fifty shipwrecks to explore this narrative. Despite the multitude of archaeological traces left by the continuous maritime traffic passing Phournoi over an extended temporal span, the convergence of these investigative methodologies reveals persisting gaps. Historical sources, toponymic evidence and archaeological discoveries exhibit limited chronological overlap. Furthermore, the archaeological record of shipwrecks on Phournoi predominantly suggests adverse weather conditions as the principal catalyst for maritime mishaps, rather than deliberate acts of piracy.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the Hellenic Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities initiated an extensive survey aimed at the documentation and cataloging of ancient, medieval and modern shipwrecks within the archipelago of Phournoi. Comprising a cluster of 20 islands, islets and rocky shoals positioned to the south of the channel separating Ikaria and Samos (Figs. 1–2), the Phournoi archipelago served as the focal point for this investigative endeavor. By the culmination of the project in 2020, the Phournoi initiative had successfully identified and documented over 50 shipwrecks spanning from the Archaic period through the first decades of the 20th century (Campbell and Koutsouflakis 2017, 2021; Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 142–225).

Nevertheless, any scholarly assessment of these shipwrecks encounters an initial challenge rooted in a pervasive and somewhat stereotypical narrative prevalent among the indigenous inhabitants of Phournoi. This narrative posits the historical characterization of their island as a haven for pirates. Such a perception permeates various media channels, including websites, daily press publications, tourist guides and even scholarly articles and historical textbooks (Hasluck 1910–1911, 169; Melas 1957, 159; Belavilas 1997, 33). Consequently, this perception has become widely accepted, ostensibly corroborated by the abundant presence of shipwrecks.

In the ensuing discourse, I endeavor to elucidate the available historical evidence, discern Phournoi's position within broader navigational networks, scrutinize the island's coastal morphology and expound upon underwater archaeological discoveries.

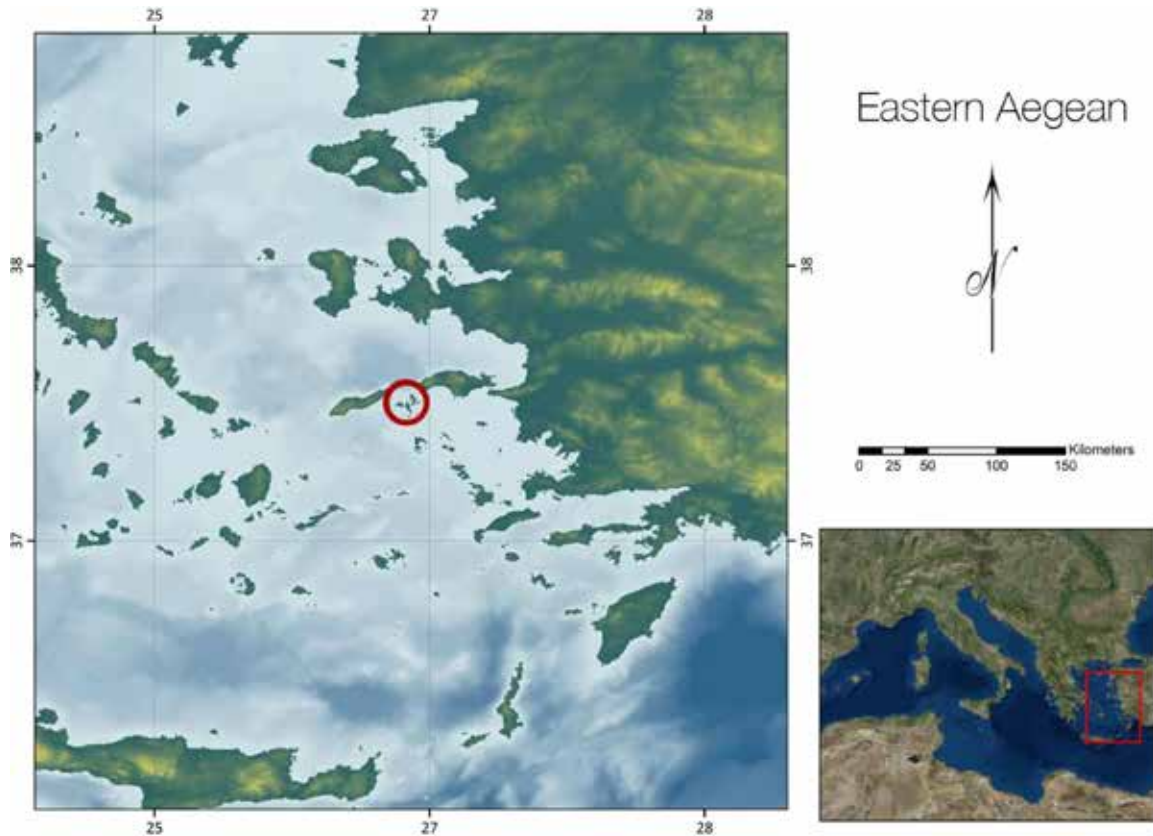


Fig. 1. Phournoi island complex, Eastern Aegean (map by Peter Campbell).

GEOGRAPHY

In ancient sources, Phournoi, as a geographical entity, never occupied a central position in significant historical events. References to them are extremely infrequent. Their landmass could not have accommodated a substantial population, and their capacity for self-sufficiency in raw materials was constrained, contributing to an economy characterized by its primary nature. From a political standpoint, the Phournoi archipelago consistently fell within the dominion of major powers in the region, serving as a bastion for Samos and conceivably for Miletus in earlier epochs (Haussoullier 1902; Rehm 1929; Shipley 1987, 10–12; Papalas 2002, 40–3; Vigiaki Sofianou et al. 2019, 40). Nevertheless, the strategic advantages conferred by their geographic placement were too significant to be overlooked.

Situated prominently along the sea route linking the northern, central and southern regions of Asia Minor, Phournoi commanded a pivotal position (Fig. 1). The significance of this maritime thoroughfare along the vertical axis of the eastern Aegean transcended the confines of local or intra-Aegean trade networks. To the south, these navigational pathways extended along the Lycian and Cilician coastlines, stretching as far as Cyprus, Phoenicia and Egypt. Meanwhile, their northern extension reached through the Hellespont and the Propontis into the Black Sea (Belavilas 1997, 61–4; Tournefort 2014, 306).

For seafarers traversing the axis along the central coast of Asia Minor, their choices were notably constrained. Samos and Ikaria, islands aligned on an east-west axis, configured a sprawling land barrier, akin to a formidable obstacle along this route, presenting three principal sailing alternatives (Fig. 3). The first, western route necessitated circumventing Cape Papas on Ikaria, exposing vessels entirely to the vagaries of the open sea between Ikaria and Mykonos. This trajectory lacked any viable harbors of refuge (Strabo 14.1.19; Georgirenes 1677, 55–6; Tournefort 2014, 302) and lay vulnerable to the fierce winds and tumultuous waves of the Ikarian



Fig. 2. Distribution of documented shipwrecks along the coast of Phournoi complex (Campbell and Koutsouflakis 2021, fig. 2).

Sea, renowned since antiquity for its inclement weather conditions (Tsagas 2005, 12–4). The virtual absence of traces from ancient shipwrecks along the southern and western shores of Ikaria corroborates this reality.

The second option, an eastern route, entailed navigating through the narrow channel flanked by Samos and Asia Minor, necessitating a significant deviation from the ship's trajectory. Undoubtedly, this path would have been preferred by vessels bound for Samos, aiming to dock at Pythagorio or one of the ports in the Gulf of Ephesus. However, under different circumstances, this route proved arduous and fraught with peril.

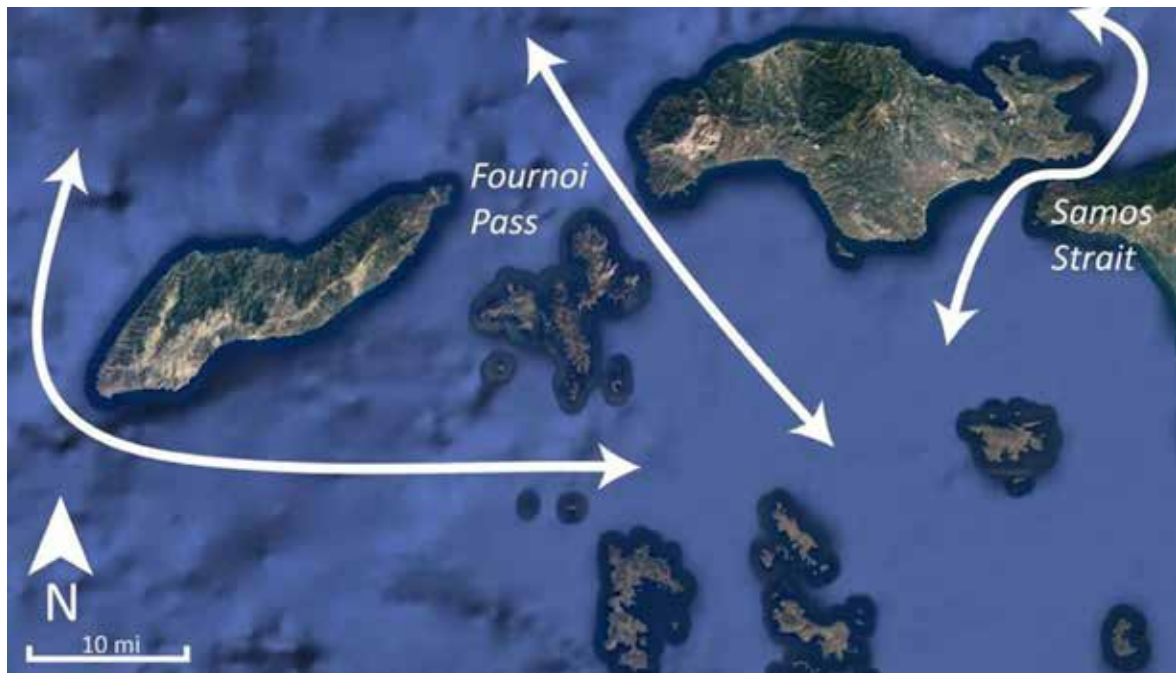


Fig. 3. Sailing alternatives for navigating through the land barrier of Samos and Ikaria (Campbell and Koutsouflakis 2021, fig. 5).

The third and final choice entailed passage through the Samos-Ikaria Strait, alternatively known as Grande Boughazi, Phournoi Pass, or the Great Samos Strait. This secure passage spanned approximately ten nautical miles, mainly dominated to the south by the fanning out twenty islands, islets and rocky outcrops of Phournoi. Consequently, navigating past the Phournoi islands emerged as virtually obligatory for ships traversing the vertical axis of the eastern Aegean (Belavilas 1997, 70; Campbell and Koutsouflakis 2021, 285–88). The heavy maritime traffic along this route over time finds corroboration in certain Ottoman cartographic works, such as the Piri Reis’ book of navigation (*Kitâb-I Bahriye*) and its late 17th century versions (Özükan 2013, 53; Walters Art Museum, manuscript W658.82B; Fig. 6). However, the significance of increased maritime activity would be inconsequential if not for the distinctive morphological features characterizing these islands.

The cross-shaped configuration of the three principal islands (Phournoi, Thymena, Ayios Minas) inherently ensured the presence of expansive leeward shores along the coastline (Fig. 2). Vessels could readily identify these leeward aspects of Phournoi and approach the shoreline for anchorage and overnight stays with ease. Moreover, to enhance safety and security further, the Phournoi shoreline featured a succession of deep and shallow bays oriented diversely, offering optimal conditions for ship anchorage: relatively shallow waters, sandy seabeds and accessible shores conducive to risk-free coastal approach. Consequently, upon approaching the Phournoi island complex from the open sea, ships enjoyed multiple avenues for secure berthing and anchorage from any direction, notwithstanding prevailing winds. This endowed Phournoi not only with the status of a routine overnight stop, but also positioned it as an exceptional sanctuary in the event of sudden adverse weather conditions. In case of shifting wind patterns during their stay on the island, alternative leeward coastlines remained readily accessible within short distances (Fig. 4). The strategic advantages conferred by the complex’s morphology did not elude the notice of ancient mariners and the political powers operating in the vicinity.

In subsequent epochs of Aegean history, as the administrative and functional unity of the Greek island realm waned, fragmenting into smaller institutional and geographical entities, Phournoi likely found themselves situated beyond the spheres of influence, enjoying a status of autonomy akin to unclaimed territory – a “no man’s land” – occupying an ambiguous interstice forming between the borders of neighboring powers. The absence of overarching hegemony in the region precipitated the infiltration of smaller, transient powers active in the Aegean into this political and geographical lacuna. In such instances, occasional denizens of the island or itinerant groups from other Aegean islands capitalized on the morphological advantages of the complex in a



Fig. 4. Coast formation of main island Phournoi (foreground), island of Kisiria (middle) and Thymena (background). Far in the background is Ikaria (Viglaki et al. 2019, fig. 229).

distinctly alternative manner: by temporarily or semi-permanently establishing operational bases on Phournoi and engaging in the ancient practice of piracy.

The activities of pirates, operating independently for personal gain and devoid of the protection or sanction of specific political authorities, have been documented across the broader maritime expanse of Phournoi since the late Hellenistic era. The geomorphological attributes of the landscape, once conducive to navigation and trade traffic, assumed a divergent purpose. Elevated vantage points transitioned into signaling stations, concealed hinterlands behind promontories became sites for ambush and assault, the deep coves along the coastline evolved into havens of refuge and concealment, and the open sea surrounding the archipelago transformed into a theater of pursuit and plunder. These geographic conditions are universally recognized as pivotal factors conducive to piracy (Semple 1916, 141). Concurrently, the narrow channels within the heart of the complex served as escape routes in the event of an unforeseen turn of events. A recurring geographical feature was the proliferation of small harbors and concealed alcoves serving as lairs for pirate fleets, with numerous promontories doubling as lookout posts and bastions. Utilizing swift, nimble rowing vessels, the temporary occupants of the islands could menace any merchant ship within reach following brief pursuit.

The distinctive topography of Phournoi consistently favored those acquainted with it and adept at exploiting its unique attributes to their advantage (Belavilas 1997, 63). Pursued vessels could seek refuge in the expansive dead-end bay of Chrysomilia or navigate the narrow channels flanking Kisiria island, thereby risking entrapment and capture. In instances when large sailing vessels were deployed to safeguard trade routes or undertake clearance operations, the shallow-drafted pirate craft could elude pursuit through these narrow straits. The constrained and shallow passages between the main island of Phournoi, Kisiria and Thymena served as escape conduits, dissuading larger vessels from navigating through them due to the perils of rocky shoals or grounding. This afforded pirate factions the essential time needed to evade capture and vanish into the plethora of blind spots the landscape afforded.

TOPONYMS

The ancient name of modern Phournoi Korseon is evidenced by ancient Greek sources, which have documented variations such as *Korseai*, *Korsiai*, *Korsia*, *Korsoi*, *Kroussai* and *Korassiai nēsoi* (Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 27–31). The etymology of the name remains elusive, although *Korassiai* bears a striking resemblance to *korasion*, meaning “maiden” or “daughter”, purportedly due to the islands being endowed as dowry to the daughters of Samos, son of Agaios, the inaugural king of Samos. Roman writers transcribed the name as *Cursie*, while early cartographers depicted it as *Crusiae* (Buondelmonti, Lupazzolo), *Hursit* (Piri Reis), *Crusia* (Benedetto Bordone, Anonymous of Lucca, Mercator, Piacenza, Blaeu), *Cursie* (Ortelius) and *Cursia* (Agnese). These variations, undoubtedly linked to the ancient name of Phournoi, often coexist with variants of the name “Phournoi”. Conversely, from the 18th century onwards, variants of the name “Phournoi” appear to prevail among cartographers.

The Latin transliteration of the ancient Greek name and its variants closely resemble the byzantine term for the act of plunder (*koursos/kourson*), attested as early as the 8th century (Sophocles 1888, s.v. κοῦρσον 687; Kriaras 1982, s.v. κοῦρσο(ν), κοῦρσο(ς) and correlate with derivatives of the Italian term *corsario*, loosely translated as “one who has a license to raid” (*letter de course*), derived from Medieval Latin term *cursarius* (“pirate”, from Latin *cursus*; Heinz 2007, s.v. *cursarius*, *cursus*). The pronounced similarity between the numerous versions of the ancient name of Phournoi and the various terms for loot and corsair in Latin languages and medieval Greek has fostered a conjectural association in popular consciousness, often leading to the belief that the islands derive their name from pirate activity. This somewhat arbitrary popular perception, however, does not preclude the historical possibility that the archipelago of Phournoi was indeed a hub of intense pirate activity in the past.

A series of coastal toponyms documented on maps or utilized in the modern vernacular of Phournoi are probably the living remnants of pirate activity in the past: *Kourniachtō* (a place for hiding or lurking), *Kleftolimano* (harbor of thieves), *Fygou* (escape), *Fylakio* (guard-post), *Vardia* (shift or guard), *Tourkolimnionas* (harbor of the Turks), *Pano* and *Kato Maneta* (upper and lower Maneta). Many of these names are commonplace along the Aegean coastline and are also encountered on other islands historically associated with piracy. However, the two bays designated as *Pano* and *Kato Maneta*, situated roughly in the middle of the eastern coast of the main island of Phournoi, warrant further comment.

It is highly probable that these two bays derived their names from the Zakynthian corsair Eustathios (Stathis) Romanos or Manetas, who, between 1678 and 1684, operated as a pirate in the Aegean Sea while based in Melos, commanding the only Greek privately owned corsair vessel at the time, most probably handed to him after the death of its former owner, the Maltese corsair Hugues Creviliers (Krantonelli 1994, 289–91). Early records of his exploits date back to 1683, when the rector of Tenos reported that Stathis Romanos Manetas had seized the Venetian consul in Paros, extorting a monopoly over the supply of galette to Venetian fleet vessels. In May 1684, Admiral Gerolamo Cornaro courted him on behalf of the Venetians, granting him a free pass permit (*salvocondotto*). Manetas subsequently conducted operations across the Aegean, Ionian and southern Adriatic, either independently or in collaboration with the Venetians and the Knights of Malta (Krantonelli 1991, 300). At the onset of the 6th Venetian-Turkish war (1684–1699), Morosini appointed him commander of the Venetian cruiser flotilla, where he actively participated in the sieges of Lefkada and Preveza (Sathas 1869, 312–19; Donos 2007, 74–85, 101). Subsequently, he assisted the Venetian admiral in levying taxes on Aegean islands and aiding in the siege of Chalkis (1688). Manetas resurfaced again in September 1694 in Chios, aiding Venetians and Knights of Malta in temporarily occupying the island (Papadopoulos 1964, 187). During a naval skirmish near Chios in 1695, Manetas seized a *saika* carrying the military treasury of the Turkish fleet, earning him the title of colonel (Krantonelli 1991, 88, 133, 300–3, 372–73).

No published documentation or official records indicate that Manetas ever conducted operations within the island complex of Phournoi, although there is some evidence that he left Astypalaia in July 1682 en route to Ikaria, to meet Capitan Bianco and set an ambush on ships from Barbary Coast (Krantonelli 1994, 291). Apart from that, his sole documented involvement in naval activities in the broader area is recorded in the vicinity

of Chios. However, Aegean folk legends may have preserved aspects of his activities that historical accounts have overlooked. Manetas is etched into the popular consciousness due to his tumultuous personal life. Legend has it that he married the beautiful Marioga in Melos, leaving her under the care of the island's bishop when he embarked on a pirate expedition. Marioga, steadfastly refusing the bishop's advances, was falsely accused of infidelity to Manetas. Subsequently, Manetas captured her and executed her at his place of business. This tragic episode forms the central theme of "Manetas' rhyme", a popular Aegean folk song known in various renditions today (Legrand 1874, 296–300; Spyridakis and Petropoulos 1962, 375–78; Poulianos 1964, 121–24). While each version features adaptations of hero names and locales, the Ikarian rendition places Manetas's attempt "in the straits of Samos" (*stes Samos ta boghazia*), with his wife's murder purportedly occurring there. Accordingly, local traditions suggest that the murder took place either in Ikaria or Phournoi, specifically in the bays of *Pano* and *Kato Maneta*. Nonetheless, whether Stathis Romanos Manetas utilized Phournoi as a base and secure anchorage during his operations in the Chios area in 1694 and 1695 remains a conjecture. Offspring of Manetas continued the family tradition, engaging in acts of piracy for the most part of the first half of the 18th century (Krantonelli 1998, 35–8, 168–69).

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Ancient and medieval sources provide scant information regarding piracy in the Phournoi archipelago. In modern historiography, these islands are often depicted as geographical extensions of ancient Miletus initially, later transitioning to Samos, possibly as part of an effort to establish an island defense enclosure, acquire naval bases for overseas trade and extend naval dominance (Papalas 2002, 40–5). The "thalassocracy" of Samos's tyrant, Polycrates, exhibited characteristics of aggressive expansionism, as described by Diodorus Siculus (10.16.1), who noted that Polycrates "*by sending triremes to the most opportune places, plundered all those who sailed*". Phournoi likely served as an overseas base for such naval operations, supported by clear evidence of Samian guards stationed there until the Hellenistic period (Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 51–7), a fact corroborated for the island of Ikaria as well.

One of the most renowned episodes of piracy in the ancient world occurred a few miles south-east of Phournoi, in ancient Pharmakoussa (modern *Pharmakonissi*), involving the capture of Julius Caesar by Lycian pirates during his voyage to Rhodes in 74 BCE (Ward 1975; Günther 1999; Osgood 2010). This incident is recounted by various ancient writers, including Suetonius (*Iul.* 4), Plutarch (*Caes.* 1.4–2.4), Polyaeus (*Strat.* 8.23), Velleius Paterculus (2.41.3) and Valerius Maximus (6.9.15), with Velleius Paterculus providing the most reliable testimony, written around 30 CE. Julius Caesar's captivity occurred within a complex political context, a year preceding the outbreak of the third Mithridatic War (73–63 BCE) and Mark Antony's (Creticus) campaign in Crete (72 BCE), during which pirates from Cilicia and Pamphylia expanded their activities across the Eastern and Central Mediterranean. According to Plutarch:

"This [the pirates'] power extended its operations over the whole of our Sea, making it unnavigable and closed to all commerce. This was what most of all inclined the Romans, who were hard put to it to get provisions and expected a great scarcity, to send out Pompey with a commission to take the sea away from the pirates" (Pomp. 25.1, trans. B. Perrin, Cambridge, Mass., 1917).

The accounts provided by Suetonius, Plutarch and Velleius suggest that the pirate band responsible for capturing Julius Caesar were essentially opportunistic brigands with ships, owing no particular allegiance and driven solely by the prospect of immediate material gain. Such groups of stateless outlaws, acting independently and lurking in insignificant islands with the hope of a lucrative catch, were likely common during the turbulent late 2nd and early 1st centuries BCE, or during any period of maritime anarchy. The Phournoi complex, with its advantageous physical terrain, would likely have been no exception to this phenomenon.

Rome responded to the piracy threat by enacting the Gabinian Law in 67 BCE, granting extraordinary powers to the outgoing consul Gnaeus Pompey to eradicate piracy throughout the Mediterranean. Pompey's campaign, meticulously planned and brief, relied heavily on diplomacy rather than outright armed conflict and proved highly effective.

Unlike *Pharmakoussa*, which gained notoriety due to a prominent incident, Phournoi never attracted significant attention from ancient historians. To uncover tangible evidence of pirate activity in Phournoi, one must turn to the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods.

The earliest account mentioning Phournoi as an ambush site for Turkish pirates targeting merchant vessels comes from the Florentine monk Cristoforo Buondelmonti in the early 15th century, who was shipwrecked on the island and endured five days without food before being rescued by a passing ship (Buondelmonti 1897, 109–10 no. 55). Buondelmonti also noted the favorable anchorages provided by Phournoi, where ships could seek shelter at night to avoid strong winds. However, he observed the island as deserted and abandoned by its inhabitants. Apparently, its use by Turkish pirates was seasonal, a pattern recurring over the centuries.

Historical records indicate that during the latter half of the 15th century, the Genoese administration orchestrated a mass relocation of the population of Samos to Chios, primarily due to piracy thriving in neighboring islands and Phournoi (Hasluck 1910–1911, 169; Melas 1957, 158–59). Ottoman admiral Piri Reis also depicted a similar scene of desolation at the beginning of the 16th century (Bülent 2002, 157). The abandonment described by Buondelmonti and Piri Reis seemingly rendered Phournoi an ideal refuge for various bands of pirates to regroup and distribute their plunder.

In the summer of 1602, the Spanish pirate Alonso de Contreras sought refuge on the deserted islands of Phournoi with his Maltese frigate and companions, following a series of successful operations in Serifos, Astypalaia, Amorgos and Patmos, intending to regroup and divide their spoils. However, they were compelled to abandon the islands when two galleys under Suleiman of Catania, then Bey of Chios, appeared, forcing de Contreras to flee via Ikaria and Mykonos (Durant 1975, 146–56; Krantonelli 1991, 107–9, 333; de Contreras 1994, 97–102).

The involvement of corsairs from the Order of the Knights of St. John of Malta and other Christian forces in the Archipelago of Phournoi is corroborated by the description of Ikaria by Joseph Georgirenes, the archbishop of Samos and Ikaria, published in London in 1677, reflecting his experiences in the early 1670s (Georgirenes 1677, 3–4, 55; Papalas 2002, 258–67). Georgirenes notes the uninhabited islets of Phournoi, located three miles south of the coast of Ikaria, boasting natural harbors capable of accommodating various vessels. He further mentions that at other times, corsairs from Malta and other Christian factions would lie in wait on these islands, ambushing ships trading between Chios and Rhodes.

The daily routine of these corsair groups is vividly described by the English captive Mr. Roberts, who was shipwrecked in Ios in 1692 and subsequently captured by pirates, forced to serve as a gunner on their ship. According to Roberts, the corsairs would spend the winter in Paros, Antiparos, Melos and Ios until early March. They would then relocate to Phournoi, where they would lie in wait from early spring to mid-summer, with lookouts stationed in the mountains overlooking the Samos-Ikaria strait, keeping watch for passing ships. They would also venture into the southern part of Ikaria, Gaidouronisi and Leipsoi, before moving further south to posts in Asia Minor, spanning from Cilicia to Cyprus. In autumn, they would return to the Aegean to sell their plunder and deliver profits to their backers in Livorno, Malta or Marseille (Hacke 1699; Ormerod 1924, 17–8; Krantonelli 1991, 89–93; Simopoulos 1994, 106).

This cyclic movement of ambush, aligned with the routes of convoys between Alexandria and Constantinople or guided by intelligence from captured vessels, was undoubtedly a prevalent method of piracy during this era. Similar tactics were employed by Jacopo Inghirami, the admiral of the Duchy of Tuscany, who amassed significant riches in the early 17th century under the banner of the Order of the Knights of St. Stephen. Inghirami's activities in the maritime regions of Ikaria, Phournoi and Samos between 1602 and 1617 are extensively documented, causing considerable disruption to Turkish trade (Krantonelli 1991, 149–51, 158–63, 177–85). In 1621, French

diplomat Louis Deshayes, Baron de Courmemin, reported from neighboring Samos that its few inhabitants, lacking the protection of a castle, were left vulnerable to pirate invasions originating from Phournoi (Deshayes 1624, 315–21).

From the 15th century onward, Phournoi remained virtually uninhabited according to almost all post-Byzantine sources. This assertion is supported by the absence of settlement remains on the island from this period, with the oldest standing houses in Phournoi dating back to the mid-19th century. The initial attempt to repopulate Phournoi is believed to have commenced around 1770, when the monk Nimphon (Nikolaos Nikolaras) departed from Patmos and, along with other monks, constructed the chapel of Evangelistria at Koumara. However, due to the persistent threat of pirate raids, he relocated to Ikaria, where in 1775 he oversaw the construction of the monastery of Evaggelistria in Mounde (Stamatiadis 1893, 82; Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 74–5). Phournoi remained sparsely inhabited, with the population reaching only 120 families towards the end of the 19th century (Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 77).

Reports of piracy based in Phournoi persisted well into the 19th century. E.D. Clarke, a traveler who visited the islands in the early 19th century, affirmed that even during his time, a significant number of pirates lurked in Phournoi and the neighboring island of Ikaria (Clarke 1814, 185; Tsagas 2003, 91–2). Disorder in the waters around Phournoi persisted long after the widespread suppression of piracy by the newly formed Greek state. In 1856, any act of raid (*course*) was declared illegal by law, and the Turkish administration of Rhodes granted English and French ships full freedom of action to eliminate the remaining pockets of piracy in the Eastern Aegean and the Ikarian Sea (Dimitrakopoulos 1977, 184; Pamphilis 1980, 141–42; Bakirtzis 2007, 230).

Nineteenth-century historians and local press accounts from Samos extensively documented the activities of Emmanuel (Manos) Mytikas, a native of Patmos, who lived and operated in Phournoi, and is often regarded as the last pirate of the Aegean (Kritikidis 1869, 117–18; Stamatiadis 1893, 39; Viglaki-Sofianou et al. 2019, 76). Mytikas was characterized as a robber (*ληστής*) or criminal (*κακούργος*), but the methods he employed, such as traversing from island to island in a makeshift boat and engaging in robbery and murder, align closely with the operations of a small-scale pirate. Upon his capture and subsequent trial in Samos in 1861, he was found guilty of 48 murders and sentenced to death. The execution took place in Marathokampos on February 19, 1863, following approval from the Sultan in Istanbul (Bakirtzis 2007, 319).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

Regarding archaeological finds, during the ongoing archaeological research of Phournoi (2015 onwards), no tangible archaeological evidence directly linked to piracy has been uncovered. While the presence of a significant number of shipwrecks along the coast could suggest heightened maritime activity, it is also attributed to extensive exploration of the seabed. Among the 50 identified shipwrecks, 48 were discovered to be laden with cargo, reducing the likelihood of piracy-related incidents. The causes of sinking, to the extent that they can be determined, predominantly stem from adverse weather conditions.

Furthermore, the chronological distribution of shipwrecks in Phournoi reveals a notable scarcity of finds from the period historically associated with piracy activity, beginning from the 15th century onwards (Fig. 5). This discrepancy, however, should not be surprising. Shipwrecks identified during underwater surveys are primarily recognized by the visual imprint they leave on the seabed. Consequently, amphorae cargoes comprise the majority of the wrecks discovered in Phournoi, as is common in Mediterranean underwater surveys. Galleys, smaller rowboats or sailing ships that did not transport ceramic cargo present far greater challenges in terms of detection, as their visual traces on the seabed are considerably less distinct. Smaller-scale piracy activities, akin to those documented in the 1553 voyage of French doctor and botanist Pierre Belon in the Aegean, are highly unlikely to leave identifiable archaeological remnants (Simopoulos, 1994, 391–92; Braudel 2002, 605).

Period		Shipwrecks
Archaic	(700–480 BCE)	3
Classical	(480–323 BCE)	3
Hellenistic	(323–31 BCE)	10
Roman	(31 BCE–4th century CE)	11
Late Roman	(4th century–7th century CE)	21
Byzantine	(7th century–15th century CE)	3
Post-Byzantine	(15th century–20th century CE)	4
Unknown		3

Fig. 5. Diagram of chronological distribution of documented shipwrecks around Phournoi.

However, both the chronological and geographical distribution of shipwrecks in Phournoi can provide insights into the utilization of the seascape from antiquity to the steam age. The distribution of shipwrecks around Phournoi exhibits non-uniformity (Fig. 2). The highest concentration of shipwrecks is observed on the northeastern coast of the central island of the complex (the homonymous to the complex island of Phournoi) and on the northern coast of the island of Ayios Minas. Conversely, the northern and more exposed coasts of Phournoi show a lack of wrecks. Similarly, another cluster of wrecks is located on the westernmost island of the complex, along the northern coast of Thymena. This pattern suggests that vessels passing through the archipelago of Phournoi tend to navigate around rather than through the central area of the complex. Additionally, variations in cargo size are discernible. The cargoes identified around the island of Kisiria, situated between Phournoi and Thymena, indicate the transit of exclusively small vessels, whereas all larger cargoes are situated on the perimeter of the complex. It is evident that large ships avoided passage through unsafe narrow straits.

The circumnavigation along the eastern coastline of Phournoi appears to have been the primary option for ships traversing the Ikaria-Samos channel, a choice that seems to be corroborated by the Ottoman portolan of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (Fig. 6). The existence of a small settlement dating back to Late Roman times beneath the modern village of Kamari, which provided access to water supply, along with the safe anchoring conditions offered by the continuous bays to the south, may be linked to this preference. Evidence suggests that this settlement persisted through Byzantine times, with a large collection of abandoned anchors discovered in the sea area in front of it, dating mainly to the late Byzantine and the Ottoman era.

Isolated finds, primarily ceramics, on the seafloor of Phournoi indicate the ongoing utilization of certain leeward bays, where no shipwrecks were found. Substantial quantities of discarded material were documented in the bays of Vlychada at the southernmost cape of Phournoi, as well as in the bays of Kariotika and Vathylakas on the northern side of Thymena. Notably, small size stone cannonballs are frequently found on the western shores of the island of Ayios Minas, particularly in Kambi Bay, some of which have been recovered and are currently housed in the Town Hall of Phournoi. Recently, a bronze arquebus dating to the 16th century was snagged by a trawler in deep waters between Ikaria and Phournoi (Fig. 7). The fisherman who retrieved it turned it over to the Port Police of Ayios Kyrikos in Ikaria, speculating that it might originate from a shipwreck.

An isolated shipwreck (no. 23), sunk in front of the modern settlement of Bali in Phournoi, may be linked to piratical activity, although the evidence it provides is somewhat limited. It comprises the hull of an elongated ship discovered near the coast at a depth of 36 meters (Fig. 8). The wreck was found devoid of all cargo and nautical equipment, with an unusually large quantity of large-sized rough stones found inside the hull. This quantity exceeds the typical ballast expected for a ship of its size. The wreck was dated to the early 19th century, primarily based on the discovery of a glass inkpot, the sole identifiable object found within the hull.

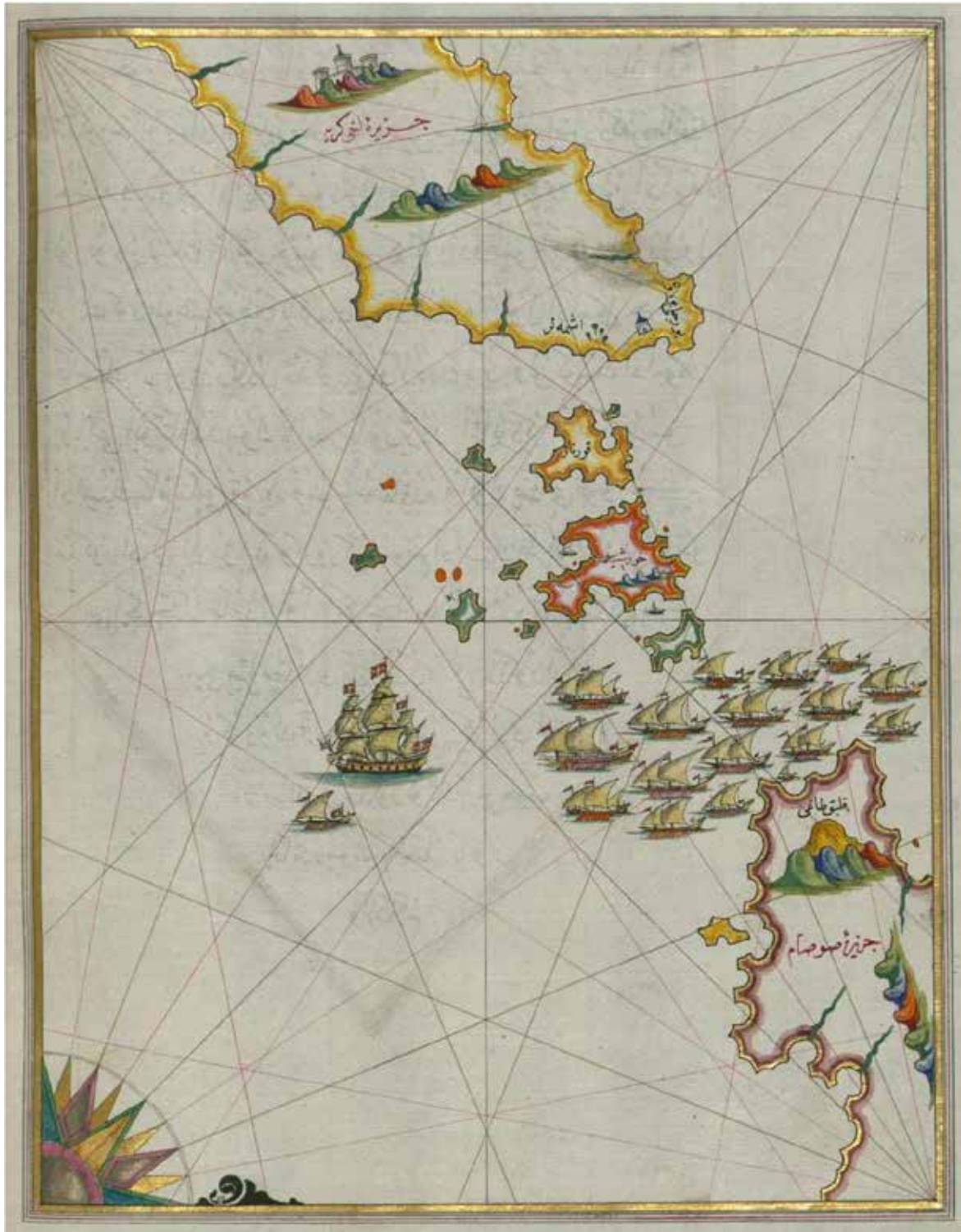


Fig. 6. Sea traffic along the Phournoi channel, according to a late 17th century version of Piri Reis' book of navigation (*Kitâb-I Bahriye*; Walters Art Museum, manuscript W658.82B)

The evidence suggests a deliberate sinking of the ship, possibly following its capture and looting, to erase any trace of the incident, a common practice in the Aegean noted by travelers like Choiseul-Gouffier (Simopoulos 1999, 378). This timeframe aligns with accounts of pirate activity in the Phournoi archipelago as documented by traveler E.D. Clarke (1814, 185). However, these hypotheses require validation through further archaeological investigation of the shipwreck.



Fig. 7. 16th century arquebus raised from the deep by a trawler between Ikaria and Phourni (photo by the author).

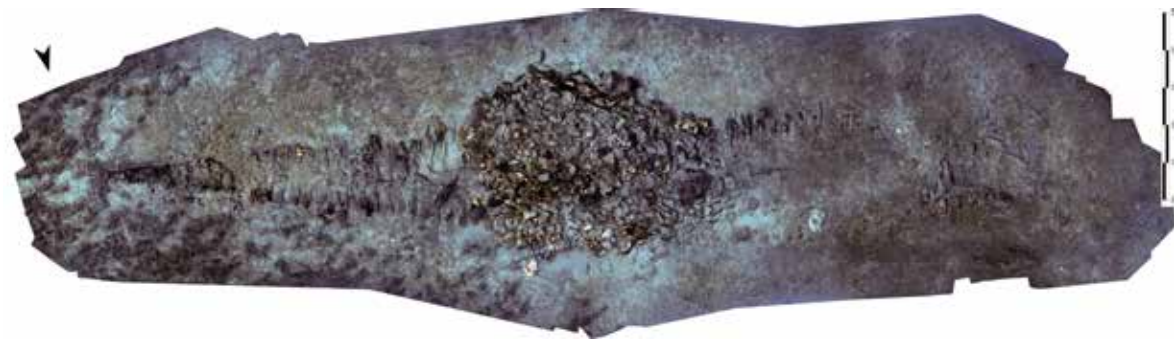


Fig. 8. Photomosaic of shipwreck no. 23 sunk in front of the modern settlement of Bali in Phourni (Viglaki et al. 2019, fig. 285).

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive evaluation of all available testimony regarding piracy in the Phourni archipelago suggests that archaeological findings align with historical accounts only to a certain extent. Underwater investigations of Phourni indicate that the island complex served as a vital waypoint and intermediate step-stone for maritime traffic in the eastern Aegean. Throughout various historical periods, sailors recognized and utilized the strategic advantages offered by Phourni's location and geomorphology.

Piracy, however, presents challenges in archaeological identification on the seabed. The traces left by pirate activity often resemble those of regular merchant shipping, complicating the interpretation of archaeological data. Consequently, distinguishing between the two can be ambiguous and the archaeological record alone may not definitively confirm instances of piracy.

Furthermore, terrestrial archaeological research on the island is still in its early stages, particularly concerning remains from the second millennium CE. As investigations expand to encompass terrestrial settlement remains, there may be opportunities to establish clearer connections between archaeological evidence and historical accounts.



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Searching for Traces of Corsair Activity in the Aegean during Early Modern Times

From Historical Accounts to Archaeological Remains

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ABSTRACT

The pirate phenomenon in the Aegean –and generally in the Mediterranean– is inscribed in the longue durée and formed an economic activity that was not always illegal. Nevertheless, the difficulty to detect its traces is a commonplace among historians and archaeologists. This paper attempts to respond to this challenge by focusing on the period of the extended Venetian-Ottoman wars of the 17th century (1645–1669, 1684–1699). During this period, the pirate phenomenon, in its corsair version, was manifested with particular intensity in the Aegean and was normalized. The normalcy with which corsairing was vested is fragmentarily attested in various types of contemporary sources, and still echoes to this day in the collective memory of islanders and the microtoponymy of the Archipelago. These testimonies, though few in number, show that various monuments and architectural remains in the island complexes of the Aegean are or could be linked with the needs of the corsairs to defend themselves, guard their captives, heal their bodies and strive for the salvation of their souls.

INTRODUCTION

In the Mediterranean, the pirate phenomenon –which is “as old as history”, as F. Braudel writes (1973, 866)– is an economic activity of island and coastal populations, tantamount to the banditry practiced by the inhabitants of mountainous areas. In any case, the proximity of the islands to the mountains of the mainland allowed for a switching of roles. The example of the bandits of Olympus, who also acted as pirates in the wider area of the Northern Sporades, is fairly well known (Vasdravellis 1970). After all, pirate activity was not confined to the sea and attacks on ships, but also developed in coastal areas, where settlements were assaulted by marauders and people were captured on the coast.

Despite its brutality, this activity was not always illegal. In early modern times, corsairing was lawful, at least insofar as the corsairs respected the terms of their license (*patente*). In any case, however, the success of pirate or corsair operations, which depended on their ability to surprise their victims, required the same level of planning and organization as any other economic activity, all the more so since the attacks were carried out using ships as the main *modus operandi*, which in turn required regular maintenance and purveyance. The cost of maintaining a ship and buying supplies could be covered by the sale of the spoils (ships, goods and also people), thus creating a cycle of activities that replicated the pirate phenomenon. Therefore, it was the needs of the ship that, first and foremost, determined the schedule of pirate or corsair operations and dictated their

interruption from time to time. During that cessation of activity, pirates and corsairs would come ashore and certain anchorages would then become their safe havens and bases of operation.

Based on the above, is it possible for one to detect traces of the pirate phenomenon on land? We will attempt to answer this question by focusing on the period of the extended Venetian-Ottoman wars of the 17th century (1645–1669, 1684–1699). In doing so, we will not concentrate on traces of material *destruction* related to the pirate phenomenon, which is a commonplace concern among both historians and archaeologists. Instead, we will focus on traces of material *construction* on land that could be associated with corsair activity.

THE MEDITERRANEAN CORSO

In the early modern period, and especially in the 17th century, a particular form of corsairing had developed in the Mediterranean with endemic characteristics, which was not only manifested in times of war but also in times of peace. This was the *corso*, a term coined by M. Fontenay (2010, 212–14, 341–42), waged by both Catholic Christians and Muslims of North Africa in the context of an alleged “war against the Infidels”. These obtained licenses to practice the *corso* from their respective rulers in exchange for a portion of their loot. In essence, this was an organized economic operation under a religious pretext, securely backed by investors with access to the authorities, from whence they secured their licenses. For this reason, those who obtained such permits had at their disposal means (ships, equipment, capital) that contemporary pirates could not even fathom. In addition to the “private” *corso*, there was also the “public” or “state” *corso*, which was practiced by the fleets of Malta, Tuscany and the Regencies of North Africa (Fontenay 1997, 211–12; Calafat and Kaiser 2016). This paper will concentrate on the former manifestation of the pirate phenomenon and, more specifically, we will examine the activity of “private” Catholic corsairs, who mainly operated and sojourned for extended periods of time in the Aegean (Fontenay 2010, 228–31, 357–406). As observed by S. Bono (1993, 54–71), several facets of the activity of “private” Catholic corsairs remain unknown.

THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF CATHOLIC CORSO

Various sources of the last three decades of the 17th century inform us that the activity of Catholic corsairs in the Eastern Mediterranean followed an annual cycle, which was imposed by weather conditions and, consequently, by the schedule of the Ottoman fleet. The fleet of *Kapudan Pasha* sailed in the Aegean to collect taxes from the islands only when the weather was favorable, between the feast of Saint George and the feast of Saint Demetrius (Hidrellez and Kasim respectively in Islam). More specifically, the corsairs acted as follows:

During the winter months, from mid-December until March or, according to another source (Deloffre and Rougeot 1976, 233), until the end of April, they retreated to islands of the southern Aegean, where no Ottomans resided, mainly Melos, Kimolos, Paros, Antiparos, Ios and Astypalaia (Fig. 1). In the spring, the corsairs boarded their ships and headed eastwards to Phournoi and their environs, between Ikaria, Agathonisi and Leipsoi, where, until the first summer months, they would ambush ships following the Asia Minor route, namely those that sailed through the passage between the Dodecanese and the Asia Minor coast that connected the ports of Syria-Palestine and Alexandria with Smyrna and Constantinople. Around the middle of July, they sailed along the coast of Cyprus and, as soon as they received the slightest news about the presence of Algerian or Ottoman vessels in Rhodes, they would head for the coasts of Alexandria and Damietta, where the shallow waters would prevent these vessels from approaching. Around the end of the summer, the corsairs would approach the Syrian coast, where they could disembark their ships and go ashore in feluccas, capturing people in and releasing them for ransom. In the autumn, they would return to the Aegean, where they would continue their operations until the advent of winter (ANF, A.E. B¹ 862, f. 75^v; Magni 1679, 292–95; Hacke 1699, 8–9).



Fig. 1. South Aegean, with all the mentioned islands (map by the author).

MAINTENANCE OF THE PIRATE AND CORSAIR SHIPS

As already pointed out, pirate and corsair operations were interrupted from time to time to cater for the maintenance and supply needs of the ships. The success of the operations, after all, heavily depended on the speed of sailing, which could only be ensured by regular maintenance of the keel, scraping it clean from marine organisms and coating it with a mixture of grease and tar. These particular jobs, namely careening and graving, were carried out at least twice a year. Another job that took place at regular but less frequent intervals was caulking, namely the sealing of the hull with a tar-soaked oakum.

In order to complete all these maintenance operations, the ship had to be disarmed in a suitable cove (Jal 1848, 388–89, 423, 655–56; Jurien de La Gravière 1885, 219–20; Fennis 1995, 454, 491–92, 849–50). In the case of pirates and corsairs, the cove in question had to fulfill a number of conditions in order to be considered suitable. First, it had to allow the ship to approach the shore as far as possible; then, it had to be secluded, and, finally, it had to provide opportunities for defense during the works, which we shall discuss below. The German scholar Johann Michael Wansleben, who traveled in the Ottoman territories in the 1670s, notes in one of his manuscripts that the corsairs graved their ships during the winter months in Astypalaia and Ios, while in June and July in Porto Chevalier (Fethiye or Şövalye Adası) and one other anchorage on the coast of Lycia (BNF, MS NAF 4193, f. 195^v).¹ Other sources, however, attest that the corsairs maintained their ships on Ios, Melos (*Gazette* 1668, 650, 660; Argenti 1954, 152) and evidently on other islands even during the summer months. Indeed, a text containing comments on maps of the Archipelago informs us that sometimes the corsairs careened their ships at Arkioi (ANF, Marine, 3JJ 221, no. 4), in the wider area of which, as we have already mentioned, they lay in wait to ambush passing ships from spring until early summer.

¹ I am grateful to my colleague Alastair Hamilton for pointing out this unpublished note by J.M. Wansleben.



Fig. 2. Astypalaia island, with all the mentioned toponyms (map by the author).

In Astypalaia, French portolans of the same period specify that the corsairs maintained their ships in the bay of Agrelidi and on the islets of Ligno and Chondro, otherwise known as *Diaporia*, on the bay of Maltezana (Fig. 2). Ligno was also called *Espalmador* or *Despalmador* by Western Europeans, a name derived from the verb “es-palmar”/“despalmar”, which in the nautical *lingua franca* meant “to grave”. Other data has led me to hypothesize that the bay of Vathy played a similar role (Koutzakiotis 2023).

On Ios, the corsairs are attested to grave their ships in the bay of Chora, called Gialos (*Gazette* 1668; Argenti 1954, 143, 152), while in the gulf of Melos, as is explicitly mentioned in various sources, they performed this task exclusively in the bay of Patrikia, which was used for the same reason by non-corsair ships later on (Fig. 3; ANF, Marine, 2JJ 44, no. 2; ANF, Marine, 3JJ 219, no. 8, 49; ANF, Marine, 3JJ 221, no. 2; BNF, MS FR 14682, 7–8; Hacke 1699, 25–6).

As regards Paros, the Englishman Anthony Roberts, who was captured in 1692 by members of a corsair crew, on whose ship he would serve for several months until his escape, informs us that the corsairs wintered in the bay of Ayios Ioannis Detis but, more than that, they would stop by the bay two or three times a year (Hacke 1699, 47; Fig. 4). Also, according to Roberts, when the corsairs were careening their ships in the spacious gulf of Naoussa, they would anchor “under a small Isle at the Head of the Bay” (Hacke 1699, 46–7), a location which should be identified with the bay of Ayioi Anargyroi opposite the islet of Galiatsos, which is still mentioned today as the former site of the shipyard of Naoussa.²

² I am grateful to Mr. Ioannis Vasileiopoulos, curator of the Historical Folklore Museum – Othon Kaparis Collection in Naoussa, Paros, for this piece of information.



Fig. 3. Gulf of Melos, with all the mentioned toponyms (map by the author).



Fig. 4. Gulf of Naoussa, Paros, with all the mentioned toponyms (map by the author).



Fig. 5. Dry-stone wall at the edge of the western side of the Ayioi Anargyroi bay, Naoussa, Paros (photo by the author).

The abovementioned bays are characterized by either a narrow entrance or one blocked by an islet, which allowed the placement of cannons at the edges of the bay and/or on the islet to prevent enemy ships from approaching during maintenance work. This was a common defensive practice that was not only followed by the Catholic corsairs. For example, in 1681, it is reported that, when corsairs from Tripoli in Libya were informed that a French squadron was pursuing them and intended to attack them in Chios, they made plans to take refuge in Nea Phocaea (Yenifoça), in order to maintain their ships and place cannons at the entrance of its harbor (Argenti 1954, 164, 166, 175). What interests us here, however, is not the practice per se, but the construction of defensive works for the placement of cannons in sites frequented by corsairs. Indeed, French portolans inform us that, in the gulf of Melos, at the cape of Patrikia, the corsairs had constructed “a fort” (*un fort*) or, at least, “something like a fort” (*comme une espèce de fort*) to install their cannons (ANF, Marine, 3JJ 219, no. 5, 22 and no. 8, 49). Roberts also attests that in the gulf of Naoussa, right on the bay of Ayioi Anargyroi, the corsairs had constructed “a small battery” for the same purpose (Hacke 1699, 47).

CORSAIR DEFENSIVE WORKS

The preservation to this day of such simple and crude structures is most likely in places that are uninhabited and, even more so, in ones that are remote and inaccessible. This is not the case for the bay of Ayioi Anargyroi, which is located at the eastern end of the settlement of Naoussa on northern Paros. Nevertheless, at the edge of the western side of the bay, there are visible remains of two dry-stone walls made of rocks and raw stones, which form a corner with preserved dimensions of about 11×2 m (Figs. 4–5). This structure faces the entrance to the



Fig. 6. Volcanic rocks rising in the middle of the strip of land to the northeast of the bay of Patrikia, Melos (photo by the author).

gulf of Naoussa in the distance and, if it served as a cannon placement point, it could well have made the bay of Ayioi Anargyroi impenetrable from the sea. It might be the case that this position was defensively reinforced by a similar structure on the opposite islet of Galiatsos, if we take into account the fact that a century later, when Naoussa served as a naval base for the Russian navy during the Orlov Revolt (1770–1774), the Russians had installed a battery unit on the same islet and had constructed a five-cannon battery, as well as four buildings (see “Plan du port de Naoussa” in Choiseul-Gouffier 1782, 70–1). It must be added that on the islet of Mavronissi, which lies a little further to the east, the inhabitants have located from time to time many cannon balls of different sizes.³

Unlike the bay of Ayioi Anargyroi, the bay of Patrikia in Melos is to this day far away from settlements and is approached by a path. The “cape of the harbor” (*la pointe du port*), on which it is said that the corsairs had built something for their defense (ANF, Marine, 3JJ 219, no. 8, 49), must be the pointed, low strip of land stretching to the northeast of the bay, facing the entrance to the gulf of Melos, rather than the higher cape that lies south of the aforementioned strip and does not have a narrow tip; thus, it can hardly be described as a “pointe” (Fig. 3). Neither of these two sites, however, currently has any visible structure. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that impressive volcanic rocks rise in the middle of the strip in question, which are spaced sufficiently apart to allow for the firing of cannons placed behind them. At the same time, the mass of the rocks themselves provides cover from any shot coming from the sea (Fig. 6). It might be the case that some of these rocks were placed in an upright position by the corsairs, which explains the description of the site as “something like a fort”. It should also be added that at the easternmost point of the northern side of the bay, reached by a path, there is a (likely natural) small plateau, which appears suitable for the placement of a cannon carriage that could be fired against any enemy ship that would approach in the area (Fig. 7).

3 See the relevant testimonies in the documentary “The Russian presence on Paros”, edited by Tasos Kasapidis and Ioannis Vasileiopoulos. Paros: Historical Folklore Museum – Othon Kaparis Collection.



Fig. 7. Small plateau at the easternmost point of the northern side of the bay of Patrikia, Melos (photo by the author).

The research I carried out in the area of Vathy in Astypalaia, within the framework of the research project directed by Professor Andreas Vlachopoulos (University of Ioannina), was more fruitful in terms of locating defensive works that have been preserved to this day (Koutzakiotis 2023). My research was limited to the rocky, hard-to-reach cape Tratsinos (or Trachini), which forms the tip of the south side of the bay of Vathy (Fig. 2). Among other later defensive works for the use of machine guns, a group of three dry-stone structures can be found (Fig. 8). Two of these have a Π -shaped parapet and each side is about 2–2.5 m long, while the third is clearly larger and is placed on higher ground than the rest. The rear side of all three backs on the steep rocks, while the interior is level and suitable for the placement of a cannon carriage. The orientation of these structures “aims” at the mouth of the Bouka, i.e. the narrow passage leading to the bay. In addition, they are placed at such a distance from the sea and at such a height that they are not only suitable for firing cannons against enemy ships attempting to sail through the Bouka, but are also impervious to cannon fire from such ships.



Fig. 8. One of the cannon structures in the area of Vathy, Astypalaia (photo by the author).

LOOKOUTS

Beyond the installation of cannons in the bays, where the corsairs found refuge for the maintenance of their ships, another practice, which may have left its traces in the landscape of the Archipelago, is the lookouts they placed on the highest points around the bays they used, either as ambush points or shipyards (Earle 2010, 158). In the 17th century, this practice is attested in Ios (*Gazette* 1668, 652–53; Argenti 1954, 152), in Pharmakonissi (de Contreras 1977, 67), and, of course, in Phournoi (Hacke 1699, 8), where even today the names of the island's bays indicate that they were once the lairs of famous corsairs: Pano and Kato Maneta bays and, possibly, Pavlos bay (Fig. 9).

The sentries alerted the corsairs to the appearance of ships in the distance by hoisting or waving small flags, thus giving orders to prepare for defensive or raiding operations. This practice should probably be associated with the name *Bandieres* (or *Padieres*) of the hill on the south side of the bay of Vathy, as the present-day inhabitants of Astypalaia do not have any explanation for this place name (Fig. 2). Thus, the name of the hill is probably not related to the relatively recent Italian occupation of the island, but to the practices of sailors of an earlier time (Koutzakiotis 2023, 231–32).

Moreover, it is no coincidence that a similar place name is found in the narrow strait between Antiparos and Paros, where corsair ships frequently anchored. More specifically, the southernmost islet of the strait is called *Pandieronissi* and, as it is the largest of a cluster of islets and skerries, it lends its name to the entire cluster: *Pandieronissia* (Fig. 1). It must be added here that one of the *Pandieronissia* bears the name *Preza* (Skandalidis 2001, 185), which in the *lingua franca* of the time denoted the spoils of corsairs or pirates, their “prize”. “Preza” as a micro-toponym is also encountered today in Kimolos (Katsouros 1975, 326).



Fig. 9. Phournoi island complex, with all the mentioned toponyms (map by the author).

BAGNO

“Bona presa” for corsairs, namely their lawful loot, included people they captured to be sold as slaves for galleys or to be exchanged for ransom. In the oldest surviving consular register of the Archipelago, the register of the chancellery of the French consulate in Melos covering the years 1690–1695, various notarial acts related to the purchase and sale of slaves and captives (Koutzakiotis 2016) have been recorded, as well as the entire cycle of economic activities that had developed around the *corso* at that time. In the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean, the place where slaves were confined was called “bagno”, a term whose origin has long been debated (Audisio 1957).

In the Aegean, the term is found today as a micro-toponym on the eastern outskirts of Xobourgo in Tenos, where the *bagno* of the Corsican Giorgio Maria Vitali was located. Vitali settled in the area in the middle of the 17th century and launched an enterprise alongside some of his relatives that practiced the *corso* on behalf of Venice (Krantonelli 1991, 217–23; Pelizza 2022, 129–31). Vitali’s contemporary, the English merchant Randolph (1687, 10), informs us that his *bagno* was located on the hill east of the Castle of Tenos and that it was a square structure where Vitali had detained over 4,000 people, of which 1/10 had been delivered to the Venetian Admiral of the Fleet.

Amanda Foskolou and Charis Koutelakis (1997, 30–1, 35–6 n. 7) have formed the hypothesis that Vitali’s palace, which includes this *bagno*, may be the dwelling depicted in a late 17th-century view of Xobourgo and appears to be located at the site of Pigadakia, where a Roman fountain is also found (Fig. 10). The teacher Georgios Dorizas (1976, 106–7), however, mentions –evidently drawing from oral tradition– that the site of Bagno lies opposite from the spring called Pigadakia, an assumption which seems to be confirmed today by the inscription at the entrance to a farmstead located further down and opposite the Roman fountain. Within this

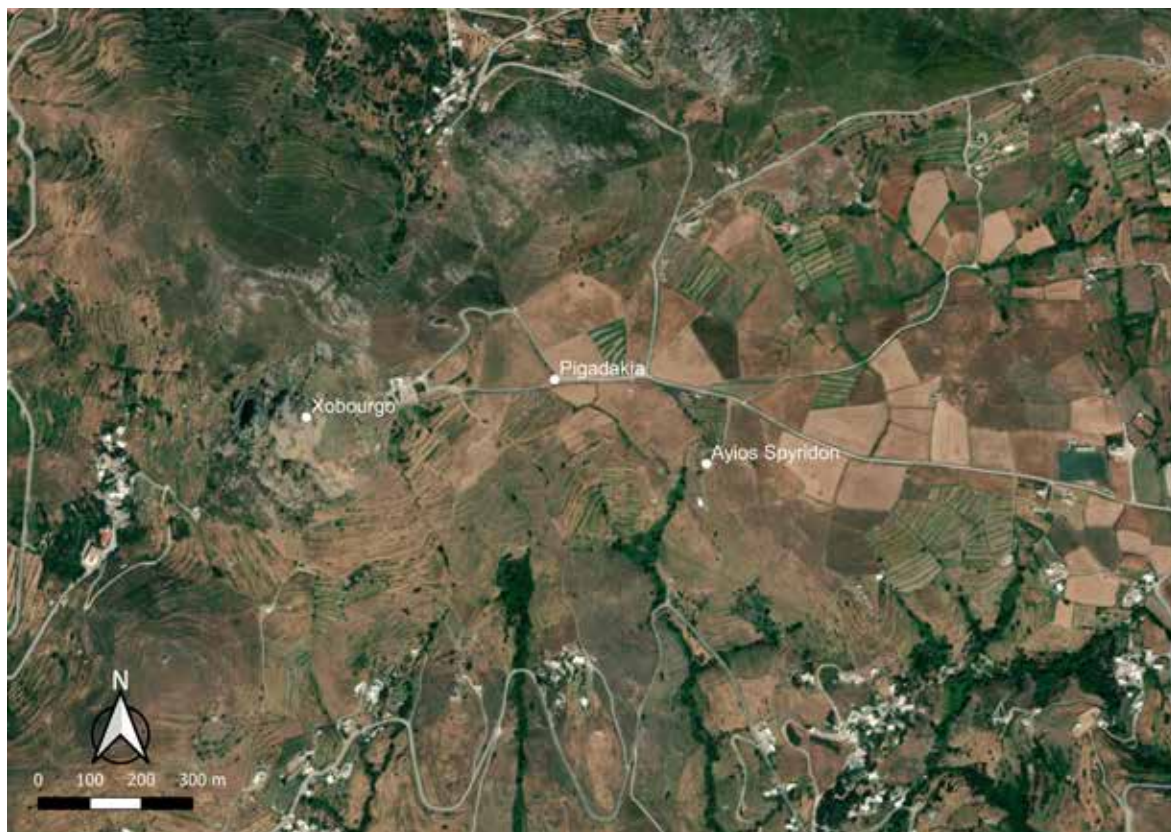


Fig. 10. The area east of Xobourgo, Tenos (map by the author).



Fig. 11. Corsair Angelo Maria Vitali's coat of arms (Florakis 2001a, fig. 33).

private area, there is also a newly built chapel of Ayios Spyridon, on the site of which, or at least a little further to the south, must have stood the homonymous chapel that forms the original setting of the coat of arms of Angelo Maria Vitali, nephew and partner of Giorgio Maria (Fig. 11; Florakis 2001a, 66–8). Consequently, it is within or around this farmstead that the remains of the Vitali's *bagno* should be sought.

CHURCHES

Despite the atrocities they committed, pirates and corsairs, like their contemporaries, never forgot the divine element and manifested their religiosity in various ways, either because they had genuine metaphysical concerns or simply for reasons of social prestige and/or alliances with the religious authorities. The historical notes of the Capuchin monks of Naxos, which also narrate events from the period under consideration, record, among other things, donations from corsairs to the local Catholic Church, which were subsequently used by the clergy to build and equip temples; these included captives (to be exchanged for ransom), sums of money, precious vessels, textiles and quantities of metals (Zerlenti 1922).

The role of the corsairs in church-building, however, was not always discreet and indirect. The Vitali coat of arms, which was mentioned earlier, bears at the bottom an inscription in Latin, which informs us that he was the founder of the church of “Spyridon, the miracle worker” (Fig. 7). He probably erected the church after he was spared from a plague epidemic, if we take into account the relevant traditions about this particular saint.

A second case of a church built by a corsair is found in the closed sea surrounded by Melos, Kimolos and Polyaigos, which is interrupted by two straits, and where corsair ships frequently anchored, as, much like in the strait of Antiparos, no enemy ship could entrap them (BSB, Cod. gall. 728, 77; Sebastiani 1687, 29). More specifically, from a study by the priest Ioannis Ramphos (1932, 31–52), we now know that the small monastery of Ayios Georgios on the islet of the same name (*Ayios Georgios*, which was called *Ayionissi* until the 19th century) was always Orthodox (Fig. 1). The surviving patriarchal sigils certify as early as 1700 that it had been erected from the ground up by the grandfather of the then abbot on the previously deserted islet.

Ramphos, however, cannot explain why the church is presented externally as a two-aisled basilica, while it is lacking in internal unity, adding that the right building of this essentially twin church was called by the Kimolians “Frangokklisia” (Ramphos 1932, 43–4). The local tradition of the Frankish origins of the church is ultimately verified by the records of the French consulate of Melos, which refer to a 1695 decision of *capitan generale* Antonio Zeno, acknowledging that the Tuscan corsair Francesco Barbieri had built a Catholic church honoring Saint George in Ayionissi (CADN, Milo et l’Argentière 3, 216).

BURIALS

The relationship of the corsairs with the Church followed them to the grave. In Paros, in 1679, the nineteen-year-old Augustin, son of the famous French corsair Hugues Creveliers, was buried with honors at the center of the Catholic church of Saint George in Naoussa and, according to the historical notes of the Capuchin monks of Naxos, the parish priest was instructed to engrave the insignia of the deceased on the tomb (Zerlenti 1922, 95–6). A search on the Internet asserts that within the church one can still see the “grave of the pirate” to this day. However, this tomb is not preserved. The church was destroyed during the Orlov Revolt, it was rebuilt shortly afterwards, its roof collapsed in 1974 due to cracks caused by the 1956 earthquake, and it was finally restored in 1994 (Fig. 12; Kaparis 1987; Aliprantis 1994). Slabs or parts of slabs from four tombs unrelated to Creveliers were placed on the new floor of the church. The doctor Othon Kaparis (1987, 185), however, published a photograph of part of a burial slab that was preserved in the now closed Byzantine Museum of Naoussa, which, according to him, depicts the “insignia” of the pirate (Fig. 13). This is certainly not the case. In the early modern period, the skull and crossbones were a common motif on the tombs of Paros and beyond (e.g., Aliprantis 1985, 68–9; Florakis 2001b), while the sundial is attested on tombs across Europe (Gagnaire, n.d.).

The corsairs had the same anxieties and fears about the hereafter as most people of their time, as evidenced by the case of the undistinguished burial of a Maltese corsair, the knight Hocquincourt. At the same time, this case shows that the manner of burial of a corsair does not always leave evidence that will stand the test of time. In 1666, the twenty-four-year-old French knight drowned when his vessel was wrecked at night near an islet of



Fig. 12. The Catholic church of Saint George in Naoussa, Paros (photo by the author).



Fig. 13. Part of a burial slab preserved in the Byzantine Museum of Naoussa, Paros (Kaparis 1987, 185).

Kassos. Three days later, his surviving companions buried him according to the Orthodox rite in the then small chapel of Ayia Marina. One of them, who narrates the events in detail, made sure that the grave bore the dead man's name and circumstances. This consisted of a single sheet of paper briefly recounting in French the story of the voyage and the death of the corsair, which was then pasted onto a plank and placed on the grave (Argenti 1954, 147).



Fig. 14. Interior view of the entrance of the Provatas Steambaths, Melos (photo by the author).

STEAMBATHS

As sailors, the lives of the corsairs often became unbearable “as evil [i.e., venereal disease] flared up”. Then, “the best medicine” was what Nikos Kavvadias (1989, 17, 19) describes as “*kapsa*” (meaning heat). The thermal baths of Melos were, thus, an additional reason why the corsairs frequented the island. And, however improbable it may seem at first, even these habits, as we shall see, have left an archaeological mark. During the last four decades of the 17th century, travelers visiting Melos mention in their texts not only the island’s water baths, but also a cavernous steambath. The following can be deduced from cross-referencing the information they provide. This steambath was located on a hill at the central Melos, about 3.5 km southwest from Old Chora (Zephyria). It could accommodate three to four people. In addition, during the final years of the Cretan War (1645–1669), the corsairs had customized the space and had even built a small room right next to the bath and probably others a short distance around it (BSB, Cod. gall. 728, 64; Pitton de Tournefort 1717, 168; Labat 1735, 332–33, 335).

There is no doubt that this steambath corresponds to the currently operational Provatas Steambaths (Figs. 3 and 14), which, after the damage caused by the 1992 earthquake, were restored in 2013 by the Municipality of Melos. In fact, one can still discern today on the walls of the Steambaths graffiti in Latin letters, most likely dating to the times when the facility was used by corsairs (Fig. 15).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the above discussion reveals that the question posed at the beginning of this paper about whether it is possible to detect traces of the pirate phenomenon on land is in the affirmative. It is that pirates and corsairs, either deliberately or because of their way of life, did not leave any remains proclaiming their status or clearly revealing their connection with their activity. Nevertheless, a thorough study of the relevant written sources and its combination with field study may yield positive results. In this paper, it became evident that traces of



Fig. 15. Graffiti ("J.G." etc.) in the Provatas Steambaths, Melos (photo by the author).

the pirate phenomenon can be identified in various categories of material culture, such as defensive works, lookouts, structures for keeping captives and slaves, burials and churches, and even in structures of everyday life, such as steambaths. In the cases examined, it is the written sources that reveal the association of certain structures or artifacts with piracy, thus providing archaeological research with evidence and guidelines for investigating the pirate phenomenon.

The *archaeology of piracy* can turn to two general categories of material culture:

The first is that related to the pirate activities and the protection of the pirates themselves and their ships (e.g., defensive works, lookouts, structures for the keeping of captives and slaves). In this category, it seems that these are modest yet effective structures, characterized by practical design, and made exclusively with local materials. The key point for associating such structures with pirate activity is certainly the geographical context, i.e., they are located in areas where their presence cannot be explained otherwise and/or are suitable for this type of activity.

The second category includes structures and artifacts of everyday life or religion (e.g., steambaths, churches, burials, tombstones). In this case, it is difficult to identify evidence that would reveal a link between these structures or artifacts and pirates, but archaeologists studying a site or a monument in an area and a period favorable to the flourishing of pirate activity can keep in mind that pirates were part of the society of their time and had the same problems and fears as other people. Their activity often allowed and/or required them to erect monuments for reasons of social prestige.

These remarks are based on the study of piracy in the early modern period, but traces of the pirate phenomenon in premodern times can be sought in roughly the same categories of structures and in places with the same characteristics, because humans, in spite of any advancements in technology through time, think and act in similar, if not identical, ways.



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APPENDIX

“Piracy in the Cyclades”

A Museum of Cycladic Art Educational Program in Experiential Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the educational program “Piracy in the Cyclades”, developed by the Museum of Cycladic Art as part of the A.P.Pir.A. research project. Piracy is closely tied to Greek history through its association with the sea, maritime professions, travel, and the active participation of Greeks in seaborne trade. Grounded in archaeological evidence and pedagogical theory, the program targets children aged 8 and above and promotes experiential learning both within the museum and in the classroom. Through a specially designed museum kit, the material is also available for remote use, ensuring accessibility for students and teachers throughout the country. The program is structured across multiple levels of difficulty and includes diverse concepts and activities tailored to participants' age, knowledge, and learning needs. Designed for flexible integration into school curricula, it can support subjects such as History, Ancient Texts, Literature, and Social Life. Featuring a thematic exhibition route and a range of interactive tools, the program fosters critical thinking, creativity, and meaningful engagement with ancient maritime history.

*In memory of Panos Valavanis, who loved
to recount the past to children and adults.*

INTRODUCTION

Museums, as places of non-formal education, have nowadays expanded their educational and social role through actions that can be carried out inside the museum, but also outside, i.e., in its natural habitat (Mouliou and Bounia 1999). Museopedagogical actions are addressed to formal education institutions, such as schools, as well as families and other groups of adults and children. A museum's resilience helps serve its educational purpose, as defined by the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (Kokkou et al. 2009).

Museums, in their effort to attract visitors and be open to everyone, start utilizing their collections in a modern and multifaceted way. Therefore, museum collections are exhibited in a dissimilar way through a variety of educational activities and programs, covering various themes and allowing the active participation of visitors, who will hopefully gain a satisfying experience that combines learning with entertainment. In recent decades, museums have expanded their activities outside their premises and buildings to reach out to groups of people, who are unable to visit their halls.

This chapter focuses on the presentation of the educational program “Piracy in the Cyclades”, created by the Department of Educational and Social Programs of the Museum of Cycladic Art (MCA), as part of the A.P.Pir.A. project (see also Samaras, this volume).

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR THE “PIRACY IN THE CYCLADES” PROJECT BY THE MCA

Museum of Cycladic Art

The MCA was founded in 1986 to house Nikolaos and Aikaterini (Dolly) Goulandris' collection of Cycladic and ancient Greek art. Since its foundation, the museum has evolved into a vibrant international cultural organization, focusing on the promotion of the ancient cultures of the Aegean and Cyprus, with particular emphasis on the Cycladic art of the 3rd millennium BCE. The permanent collections of the museum have been formed through donations of its founders, Nikolaos and Dolly Goulandris, numerous private collectors (K. Politis, L. Eftaxias, T.N. Zintilis, etc.), foundations (Academy of Athens) and other bodies (Commercial Bank). Today, MCA houses one of the most comprehensive private collections of Cycladic art, with typical samples of the world-famous Cycladic marble figurines. The museum's permanent collections include 3,000 objects of Cycladic culture, ancient Greek and Cypriot art, as well as fragments of cultures that flourished in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean from the 4th millennium BCE to circa the 6th century CE.

The museum's permanent collections as displayed in the main building (4 Neophytou Douka Street entrance) are presented in a modern way and using interactive means in the following permanent exhibitions: (a) Cycladic culture, (b) ancient Greek art – a story with images, (c) Cypriot culture, and (d) scenes from everyday life in antiquity. (<https://cycladic.gr/>).

The founder of the Museum of Cycladic Art was Dolly Goulandris (†2008). Her vision was to house and promote as a public good the private collection of works of Cycladic culture and ancient Greek art that she had collected with her husband Nikolaos Goulandris (†1983). Since 2008, with the so-called baton passing of the museum's management to Mrs. Kassandra (Sandra) Marinopoulou, new strategic objectives have been set, such as the emergence of international trends in contemporary art, the consistent production of periodic exhibitions, inventive promotion of archaeology, as well as attraction and familiarization of a younger audience with art. The vision of the new management had four main axes: (1) to boost the museum's extroversion towards all social groups, (2) to host multiple exhibitions that will foster a dialog between ancient Greek and modern or contemporary art, (3) to create the museum's digital footprint in compliance with the physical one, and (4) to enhance the museum's international visibility through exhibitions and actions abroad, as well as via collaborations with leading museums abroad. Through the adoption of a more direct and welcoming profile, MCA succeeded in integrating new technologies into its content, created communities of users who love art and disseminated its cultural message to a wider audience, while nurturing a relationship with it.

The Department of Educational and Social Programs

The MCA's Department of Educational and Social Programs operates since its foundation in 1986. Its educational activities focus on school children, teachers, college students, toddlers and parents. It designs multiple educational programs offered to school groups that visit the museum. The programs draw their themes from its permanent collections, as well as its temporary archaeological and contemporary art exhibitions that take place all year round. It further designs programs for special schools, for people with disabilities and other vulnerable social groups, such as refugees, groups from rehabilitation centers, as well as groups from Friendship Clubs and nursing homes. The activities of the Department of Educational and Social Programs include workshops for families, kids' art contest, experiential workshops and seminars for teachers and students, publications, museum kits, cooperation with other entities (ministries, universities, libraries, etc.), remote access programs, participation in European programs (Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe). In the context of European programs, the MCA collaborated with cultural institutions and universities from various EU countries to develop, among other outputs, accessibility and inclusion materials for individuals with multisensory disabilities, self-assessment tools for museums, and both touring and digital exhibitions.

The First Educational Programs of the Museum of Cycladic Art

School educational programs, inspired by the museum's permanent collections, have been held at MCA since 1986. Cycladic civilization, ancient Greek costumes, ancient Greek pottery and, soon afterwards, mythology were the main themes of the first educational programs. Students would watch an introductory video with images and would then visit the corresponding hall, where they were invited through narration to actively participate, discovering the exhibits displayed using a form containing various activities. In the workshop area, where the introduction took place, there were copies of the exhibits that children could touch and observe. These programs, with various additions, changes and adjustments, operate under the same principle to date.

In addition to school groups, selected educational programs were designed for families and implemented during festive periods. At Christmas 1989, a program on ancient Greek games was held. Material, such as toy reproductions, bunions or ankles, was collected, and the workshop space was configured in such a way that children could play games in teams. Children were informed of the games played in ancient times, saw and touched toy reproductions, such as dolls, rattlesnakes, miniature vases and played games in groups using ankles, as well as hopscotch and ball games. With the information and scientific material amassed, the book *Playing in ancient Greece with Lysin and Timaretin* was published (Platis 1998). The book and the content of the festive program were used for the museum kit about games in ancient Greece. Prior to the said museum kit, another kit on Cycladic culture was designed. The educational material under the same theme, i.e., the activities' form and the museum reproductions, was part of the content of the first museum kit, supplemented with more exhibits' copies, bronze tools, printed and audiovisual material and educational games offering a comprehensive museum experience as well as an educational program from the museum to school.

DESIGN METHODOLOGY FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN MUSEUMS

Pedagogical Theories

An experiential approach to learning is the main goal set by museums when designing educational programs and other actions. People participating in educational programs discover museum exhibits and through various activities, manage to acquire knowledge using their critical thinking. The museums' collections are the source of all pedagogical actions that aim at the participants' active involvement and spontaneous creative expression (Nikonanou 2010).

Regarding the creation of museum kits, the selection of thematic and educational material rely on modern theoretical learning methodologies and meet the needs of the classroom and the teacher who wishes to design multiple educational actions. Contemporary theoretical approaches and methods applied in museum education actions focus on learning, entertainment, creative participation, enhancement of imagination, personal expression and experiential experience (Nikonanou 2015). The central role is now assumed by children and learning becomes child-centered (Roopnarine and Johnson 2006). Children learn in a pleasant way through active participation in educational activities and games.

Pedagogical theories of didacticism and behaviorism reflect bygone advances, where the individual was seen as a passive learning receiver, accumulating information. At the opposite end of the spectrum one can find the educational theories of discovery and constructivism, which is a modern way to involve the learner in the acquisition of knowledge. In addition to the abovementioned theories, others, such as the ones by Dewey and Montessori, argue that children actively participate in the museum space by creating their own meanings in the process of acquiring knowledge (Dirogianni 2011). This mode of participation and contact with museum objects benefits children, cognitively and emotionally, and enables them to learn in a pleasant, creative and interactive way by participating in creative activities (Filippopoliti 2015).

The learning theories through which museum kits are designed and educational activities are created are the following: J. Piaget's constructivism, L. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, J. Bruner's discovery theory and H. Gardner's multiple intelligences (Filippopoliti 2015). These theories share the notion of knowledge acquisition in an experiential way through interaction with the social environment. From preschool age, according to the Swiss philosopher, natural scientist, and major representative of the cognitive constructivism or constructivism psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), the active participation of children in the educational process contributes to their cognitive development (Cole and Cole 2002). Discovery theory is the fundamental component of museum education. During a museum visit, children who are actively involved in the process, learn by investigating the various collections, discovering the exhibits. The process efficiency lies in the active participation of children achieved, *inter alia*, by asking questions and participating in a dialog (Hooper-Greenhill 1999). This theory is further duplicated in the museum kits, with which the museum experience “travels” outside the museum space. The discovery educational theory, represented scholarly by the US psychologist Jerome Bruner (1915–2016), focuses on learning as an active process, in which children form new ideas and concepts based on their existing knowledge (Filippopoliti 2015). The importance of this theory lies in exploring a process that gives students the impetus to be able to solve problems on their own.

Per the theories herein, the design of museum educational activities accentuates the role of museum educators, who, while applying narrative and Socratic methods and using stories and questions including constructivist features, will contribute to children's active participation and help them shape their own interpretations and meanings. As far as museum kits are concerned, this role is undertaken by teachers. The design and content of museum kits and the envisaged actions is the outcome of the above pedagogical theories. With the teacher's guidance, children participate in various activities and gain an experiential knowledge. In the framework of the content of the museum kit, teachers are enabled to design educational actions and implement a personalized program. This way, they set their own pedagogical goals and choose the theories they will apply for the formation and dissemination of knowledge.

THE “PIRACY IN THE CYCLADES” PROGRAM

The archaeological investigation of the phenomenon of piracy in antiquity provided the Department of Educational and Social Programs of the Museum of Cycladic Art with material for the design of the educational program “Piracy in the Cyclades”. This program includes various levels of difficulty, concepts and actions, as well as product production according to the participant's age, knowledge and skills. It will be addressed to children aged 8 and above and will be potentially included in History, Ancient Texts, Literature and Social Life courses. The educational material can be used either on the museum's premises or in schools, providing therefore access to students and teachers throughout the country.

When the Museum received the proposal submitted by scholars to participate in the A.P.Pir.A. research project by creating an educational program, we decided to adhere to the same principle and design specific educational material for children and families that can be used within the museum, as well as lending material for teachers who wish to use it in the classroom, as part of a lesson or a project.

The educational program was a challenging opportunity, as material for piracy in the prehistoric Cyclades had to be designed from scratch relying solely on archaeological findings. Beyond any doubt, the study of piracy over time and in contrast with other historical periods utilizing archaeological findings, historical texts and other sources, contributed to the project's success. The initial step was the information collection. Then, the most difficult and demanding step followed, as specific information had to be adapted to be easily understood by children. This way, tailor-made, informed material was created to cover children's educational needs on a very specific topic.



Fig. 1. The floor plan with stops.

All activities were designed for the permanent Cycladic culture collection of the MCA. The main objective of the educational program is to provide cohesive and robust answers to questions related to piracy, such as what piracy is, what is the definition of pirate, why would one become a pirate, “types” of piracy, piracy in the Greek seas in antiquity, piracy during the Early Bronze Age II (ca. 2400–2200 BCE), etc. Children and families participating in this program will be able to retrieve information in an interactive and experiential way.

INSIDE THE MUSEUM: THEMATIC ROUTE ON PIRACY

Museum visitors shall follow a route with selected exhibits from the permanent collection of Cycladic art (Figs. 1–2). The route in the dedicated hall includes a floor plan with stops at selected exhibits and texts about navigation and maritime trade in the prehistoric Cyclades. With the help of the floor plan, students and children accompanied by their parents can in turn discover the map of the Cyclades, a wall text related to shipping and trade with reference to bases and shelters for pirate expeditions, frying pans with reference to decoration (sea, ships, etc.), a pig-shaped zoomorphic pyxis related to animal theft, the figurine of the hunter-warrior and bronze age weapons, a female figurine of a pregnant woman with references to women abduction.

Exclusive labels and drawing representations have been designed for each exhibition station. Each label contains information on piracy-related exhibits, as well as discussion topics to be debated either by students or family members using the educational material. In addition to labels, exact copies of ancient exhibits or accessible 3D prints are located at different exhibition stations (Fig. 3). The aim is to offer an immersive and genuinely interactive experience to all visitors. Also, a dedicated box is designed that includes a map of the Cyclades, a floor plan with stations, information cards and labels, copies of selected exhibits, 3D prints of selected exhibits as well as objects related to piracy, such as ships.

OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM: MUSEUM KIT

The lending educational material is addressed to children aged 8 and above. It is a museum kit containing material dedicated to teachers, an information brochure, educational classroom activities suggestions, illustrated cards, a board game and 3D prints of selected exhibits from the exhibition of Cycladic art related to piracy.

The information brochure “Piracy in the ancient Cyclades: From the prehistoric to Roman times” contains multiple questions and answers that stimulate both students’ and teachers’ investigative mind, enabling them to



Fig. 2. The route with selected exhibits.



Fig. 3. 3D prints of selected exhibits.

discuss, reflect, investigate what was happening in ancient times and eventually learn in an interactive and fun way (Fig. 4).

Illustrated cards are mainly for teachers and contain information on piracy from prehistoric to Roman times (Fig. 5). Through these cards, teachers can create their own story to narrate to students and make a timeline with information about the different periods of antiquity and piracy.

The board game “Pirates in the Cyclades” is an educational game that enables children and adults to learn through play about the lives of pirates in antiquity, the origin of pirates and what were their motives, what was the pirates’ modus operandi and how many types of piracy are there, what was the relationship between pirates and authorities, etc. (Fig. 6).

The game contains a map of the Cyclades with steps and stops designed on a tarp. Pirate-sailors embark on a journey full of adventures. Who will be the first to arrive at the destination? Cards with questions, obstacles and rewards sometimes facilitate and sometimes make it difficult for pirates to travel (Fig. 7).

In this game, students are split into two (or more) teams or play individually. They take on the role of archaeologists and investigate various cases to find out whether it is a case of piracy or not. They are given various clues from written sources, archaeological sites, objects, iconography, etc., and are asked to answer which of these are potentially linked to pirates. Each clue will be discussed, and after being categorized as being

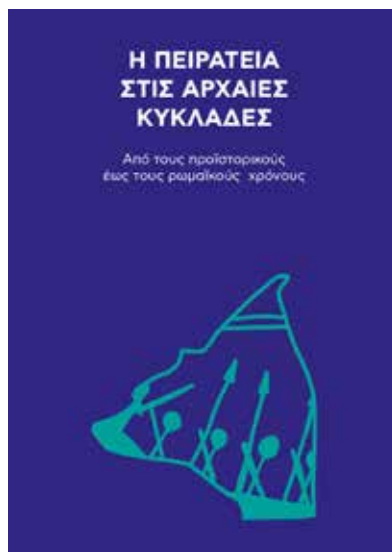
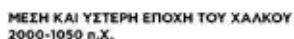


Fig. 4. The information brochure.



Η ημερομηνία από το 1200 και έως το 1050 π.Χ. περίπου χαρακτηρίζεται και έντονη παραγωγή δραστηριότητα όπως καταγράφεται και τις παραστάσεις οι αγάλια και το κοσμητολογία, όπως βραχίονας και να σημειωθεί ότι την προτομία είναι κίτρινος η παραστάσεις είναι ελαφρώς. Από τα διάφορα στοιχεία που μελετήσαμε οι ερευνήτες, και συγκεκριμένα τις παραστάσεις οι αγάλια και το κοσμητολογία της εποχής αυτής, παρατηρούμε αύξηση οι διάφορες επιδράσεις που συνδέονται περισσότερο με την παραστάσεις και λιγότερο με το κοσμητολογία επιδράσεις.

[illegible]

Fig. 5. Illustrated cards.



Fig. 6. The board game.



Fig. 7. The board game cards.

pirate or not, children will receive the correct answer along with an informed explanation. Each clue has a different score depending on the degree of difficulty.

Based on the clues provided, children will most likely consider that all ships belong to pirates, all fortifications are to repel pirate attacks, etc., in this way the game gains a plain field. The board game offers young players an experiential learning while enhancing their critical thinking. Children will familiarize themselves with informed historical and archaeological facts and data, they will develop their own reasoning and critical thinking and get acquainted with the real work of an archaeologist (see also <https://cycladic.gr/en/museum-kit-piracy-in-ancient-cyclades/>).

“PIRACY IN THE CYCLADES” PROGRAM: ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The “Piracy in the Cyclades” program offers a comprehensive hands-on experience. Children actively participate, explore and discover tangibly process objects, ask questions, answer questions and engage in an open and stimulating dialog. The enhancement of imagination and creativity leads all participants to answer questions related to piracy in antiquity and to foster their own argumentation and conclusions (Agostinho et al. 2004). Children use their senses, collaborate, express themselves and acquire knowledge in a pleasant way happily involved in multiple ways throughout this experiential learning that characterizes learning in the museum (Nikonanou 2015). The educational material on piracy was the outcome of a seamless cooperation between scientific team members. Through this cooperation, a significant milestone was achieved: dissemination of research results and information on piracy to young and old.



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