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TOWARDS A REGIONAL HISTORY

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by Björn Forsén

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Cover: The Early Hellenistic fortress Agios Donatos of Zervochori seen from the south.  
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# New Early Iron Age and Archaic Sites in Thesprotia

Antonia Tzortzatou and Lila Fatsiou

The Early Iron Age<sup>1</sup> and the Archaic period were, until recently, something of a “dark” interval in the history of Thesprotia. With the exception of a few finds of the sixth and fifth centuries BC, there were no indications of human activity in the present *nomos* (prefecture) of Thesprotia between the Late Bronze Age and the Late Classical period.<sup>2</sup>

For the Submycenaean and Protogeometric periods, the absence of archaeological remains would seem reasonable, considering the general instability related to the movements of the Epirote tribes, as well as the rudimentary character of the habitation sites of the early nomads of Epirus, whose ruins are traced with difficulty.<sup>3</sup> For the Geometric and Archaic periods, however, the absence of commercial activity is surprising, given that the southern part of Epirus, southern Illyria and the Ionian islands were at this time attracting the interest of settlers from southern Greece.<sup>4</sup> However, this picture has recently changed due to the research of the 8th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities<sup>5</sup> and the Finnish Institute at Athens,<sup>6</sup> providing us with new insight into the period between the ninth and fifth centuries BC. This article offers an overview of the finds from five sites (Fig. 1) excavated by the Ephorate (Mavromandilia of Prodromi, Neochori, Grika, Pyrgos Ragiou and Mastilitsa).

## Mavromandilia of Prodromi

During the construction of an irrigation channel 200 m from the Kokytos river, at the site Mavromandilia<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 1), an archaeological deposit rich in Early Iron Age pottery was

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<sup>1</sup> “Early Iron Age” is used here as a general term to embrace the Submycenaean, Protogeometric and Geometric periods, thus the period between 1120/1100 and 730/700 BC. The lower limit for the Geometric period is marked, in Epirus, by the foundation of the Elean colonies in the area of Kassopaia, during the late eighth and early seventh centuries BC. However, according to Dakaris, it is not possible to follow rigid chronological divisions, due to the conservatism of the material culture of the indigenous population, which remained relatively unaltered after the Late Bronze Age and until the Late Classical period (Dakaris 1971, 31-32; Dakaris 1972, 71, 76; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 284).

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that ancient Thesprotia had different borders than those of the modern *nomos* Thesprotia. For the shifts on the confines of Thesprotia from the Late Bronze Age onwards see Dakaris 1972, 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 285; Dakaris 1964, 8; Dakaris 1972, 3; Gravani 2005, 554.

<sup>4</sup> Apart from four Elean colonies founded in Kassopaia during the late eighth to early seventh century BC (Dakaris 1971), Corinth established a series of colonies along the coasts of Akarnania, Epirus, southern Illyria and the Ionian islands (Leukas and a possible trading post at Ithaca), sometimes in collaboration with Korkyra, which was also a Corinthian colony of the eighth century BC. For a brief account of the Corinthian-Korkyrean colonies see Bakhuizen 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from the sites described in this article, see also Svana, this volume.

<sup>6</sup> See J. Forsén, this volume.

<sup>7</sup> Rescue excavation was carried out in 2005 by E. Nikolaou, under the supervision of G. Riginos. The study of the material is still in a preliminary stage. For more finds of Early Iron Age date from the wider area of Mavromandilia, see Forsén, this volume. For the geo-archaeological setting of the site, see Lavento and Lahtinen, this volume.



Fig. 1. Map of Thesprotia with sites of the Geometric and Archaic period.

found. The stratigraphic sequence within the excavated ditch was problematic, since both Hellenistic and Mycenaean sherds were found along with the Early Iron Age pottery, while no architectural remains have been traced. The pottery can be classified into three distinct categories: (1) handmade, undecorated coarse ware, (2) matt-painted ware and (3) imported, decorated Geometric pottery.

Most of the pottery belongs to the undecorated coarse ware. Typical of this ware are large, open vases. As for the smaller examples, a kantharos (Fig. 2a) finds close counterparts in vessels of the eighth century BC from Vitsa.<sup>8</sup> The coarse, undecorated

<sup>8</sup> With regard to size and clay composition, the vessel could be dated to the mid-eighth century BC (Vokotopoulou 1986, 234-235). For a close counterpart see Vokotopoulou 1986, 103, pl. 151β, fig. 10δ (no. 2244/T. 79).



Fig. 2. Undecorated (a) and matt-painted ware (b-g) from Mavromandilia.

ware from Mavromandilia could, on the basis of the imported pottery found in the same context, be tentatively dated between the eighth and seventh centuries BC. However, the presence of a few “wish-bone” handles,<sup>9</sup> characteristic of the Bronze Age, but which continue into the Geometric period, in addition to a Mycenaean kylix stem, could raise the chronology to the Late Bronze Age.

<sup>9</sup> “Wish-bone” handles are a characteristic “northern” type of the Middle Bronze Age, with wide distribution in Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus, Albania, Corfu and Leukas (Metallinou 2005, 49, n. 22). In Epirus this type of handle is no longer in use during Phase II of matt-painted ware (Vokotopoulou 1986, 266).



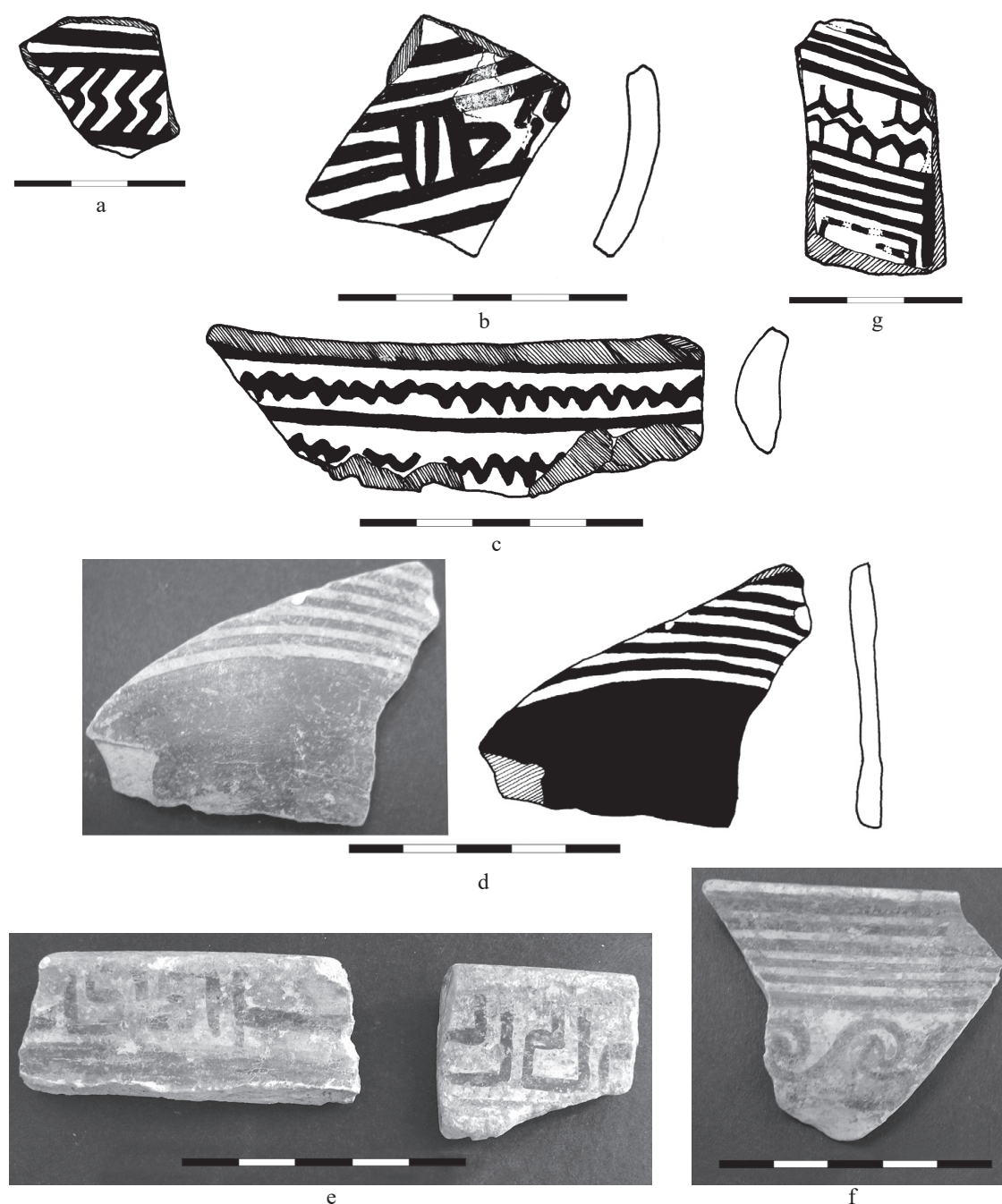


Fig. 3. Imported Geometric pottery from Mavromandilia.

Matt-painted ware is represented by a small, though characteristic, group of sherds. They belong to the “north-western matt-painted” or “Boubousti” ware, and present many similarities to the material from Vitsa. The majority of the sherds fall into Phase II, dated between the mid-ninth and the end of the eighth century BC<sup>10</sup> (Figs. 2b-e). They are handmade, mostly thick-walled and usually of orange or buff colour. The surfaces are

<sup>10</sup> For various examples see Vokotopoulou 1986, 222-223, 246-247, 266-272, pl. 12-15, 17 and fig. 46δ (5945/T. 80), fig. 54 (no. 5383). At Vitsa, Phase II pottery was found in graves, securely dated on the basis of the imported Geometric pottery (see Vokotopoulou 1986, 269). For the characteristics of Phase II see Vokotopoulou 1986, 258-266; Tartaron 2004, 84.

unsmoothed, with no traces of slip. Decoration, applied in matt, dark brown paint, is linear and consists, mainly, of pendant hatched or solid triangles, multiple diagonal lines, cross-hatched bands and chevrons. Two sherds (Figs. 2f-g) could possibly be classified to Phase I, between the end of the twelfth century and 900 BC. They are thin-walled and of more refined clay, and the decoration is carefully executed.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the above-mentioned finds, the site at Mavromandilia of Prodromi comprises a link for the diffusion of matt-painted pottery from the hinterland of Epirus towards Ephyra, considering its key position along the routes which connected the plain of Korytsa with the coastal zone of Thesprotia, via Dodoni.<sup>12</sup>

The imported wheelmade decorated sherds (Fig. 3) date to the Late Geometric and Subgeometric periods, although some examples could be also tentatively dated to the Middle Geometric.<sup>13</sup> The prevalent shapes are the skyphos and kotyle, the krater and other large open vases and the oinochoe. The decorative motifs are recurrent: continuous or intermittent meanders, vertical zig-zags or wavy lines in a metope within bands of horizontal lines, horizontal zig-zags, multiple parallel lines etc. Characteristic is the presence of skyphoi which belong to the Thapsos Group<sup>14</sup> (Figs. 3f and g).

The imported pottery from Mavromandilia represents evidence of extensive commercial activity between Thesprotia and southern Greece. It is mainly of Corinthian origin, although the presence of other workshops cannot be excluded, such as Attic-Euboean, Thessalian, Boeotian, Argive, and those of western Greece.<sup>15</sup>

## Neochori and Grika

During the construction of the Egnatia highway near Neochori (Fig. 1),<sup>16</sup> in the area of Paramythia, a small assemblage of Corinthian vases of the sixth century BC was found (a trefoil-mouthed jug<sup>17</sup> [Fig. 4a], a kotyle<sup>18</sup> [Fig. 4b] and a small cutaway-neck jug<sup>19</sup> [Fig. 4c]), two of which were associated with a simple pit-burial.

<sup>11</sup> For the characteristics of Phase I see Vokotopoulou 1986, 258-265.

<sup>12</sup> Tartaron 2004, 87, fig. 5.8.

<sup>13</sup> Among the earliest parallels for the sherds in Figs. 3a-b see Coldstream 1968, pl. 17j for a Middle Geometric II sherd of an open Corinthian vessel; Vokotopoulou 1986, 121, pl. 68ζ (no. 2220/T. 129), for a skyphos at the transition from the Middle Geometric II to the Late Geometric. For motifs similar to the one on the sherd in Fig. 3c, which appears on Corinthian vases from the Middle Geometric to the Late Geometric and Sub-Geometric periods, see Vallet and Villard 1964, 23 & pl. 3:7; Vokotopoulou 1982, fig. 11.

<sup>14</sup> For a pot with decoration similar to the one in Fig. 3f see Vokotopoulou 1986, 163, 278-279, fig. 69ε (no. 2226/T. 139), dated to the Late Geometric period (750-725 BC) on the basis of a parallel from Ithaca. For a close parallel to the sherd in Fig. 3g see Kolonia 1989, 190-191, pl. 144γ, a Corinthian miniature skyphos of the Thapsos Group, from the cemetery of Amphissa.

<sup>15</sup> For the motif on the sherds in Fig. 3e, which appears on Corinthian, Attic, Argive and Boeotian vases, see Kunisch 1998, Abb. 22c. For the sherd in Fig. 3d see Mazarakis-Ainian 1997, 66, pl. 27a (krater sherds of the Late Geometric-Early Protoattic period from Eretria).

<sup>16</sup> The rescue excavation was conducted by Ch. Gania, G. Nika and G. Yfandis under the supervision of G. Riginos. For a brief overview see *ArchDelt* 56 (2001), Χρσνικá (in press).

<sup>17</sup> For shape see Blegen *et al.* 1964, 109, pl. 33 (Deposit 46a).

<sup>18</sup> For shape see Clement 1969, 119, pl. 108β (IPG 68-95); Blegen *et al.* 1964, 108, pl. 20 (Group ii); Lorandou-Papantoniou 1999, 193, pl. 19, pl. III:119.

<sup>19</sup> For shape see Douzougli 1992a, 278-281, pl. 82ε.





Fig. 4. Corinthian vases from Neochori.

From the same area comes a female standing figurine of the first half of the sixth century BC (Fig. 5a). The figure wears an Ionic chiton and holds a flower and a fruit. Similar figurines have been found in Corfu, in the excavation of Mon Repos,<sup>20</sup> related to an Archaic to Early Classical sanctuary. To the same type belong three other figurines found in Thesprotia, at Pyrgos Ragiou (Fig. 5b) and Mastilitsa (Fig. 5c), respectively.

We should also mention two Korkyrean silver staters of the late sixth century BC, found near the modern village of Grika, on the site called “Stenes”.<sup>21</sup> Together with two Corinthian staters known for some time from the area of Paramythia<sup>22</sup> it can be confirmed that from the sixth century BC trade was carried out not only on the basis of product exchange, but also with the valid Corinthian currency.

The above-mentioned finds from Neochori, Grika and Mavromandilia of Prodromi suggest that imported products from Ithaca, the colonies on the coast of Epirus and, after the sixth century BC, from Corfu reached the hinterland of Epirus. In that context, the importance of the natural passageway of Paramythia in the movement of goods is clearly illustrated. Moreover, the Late Archaic burial at Neochori implies the existence of a nearby settlement. The area, close to the two rivers (Kalamas and Kokytos) and the small lake Chotkova, was rich in natural resources and must have been ideal for agricultural and pastoral activities, due to the fertile soil, a variety of pasturelands and the proximity to fresh water.

<sup>20</sup> For a similar figurine see Dontas 1964, 327 (MR 370), pl. 371a, where it is classified as “Lechat type”, although similarities with that type are not obvious.

<sup>21</sup> Preka-Alexandri 1995, 446-447; Sarras 1998, 209-210, 212. The obverse side depicts a cow to the left, looking back at a calf which it suckles, the reverse depicts two stellate patterns within incuse rectangles. See Sear 1978, 175, no. 1766 (B.M.C. 7.10); Spetsieri-Choremi 1981, pl. 14:155 (variation D).

<sup>22</sup> Dakaris 1972, 78, 80.



Fig. 5. Archaic figurines from Neochori (a), Pyrgos Ragiou (b, d-g) and Mastilitsa (c).

## Pyrgos Ragiou

In the middle of the Kalamas delta, on a low hill 500 m from the old river mouth, stands the small fort of Pyrgos Ragiou (Fig. 1). It has been suggested that it was built by the Korkyreans during the fifth century BC, forming part of the “Korkyrean Peraia”, and that it was used as a stronghold to protect the Lygia Peninsula from the north.<sup>23</sup> Although it cannot be confirmed that the site was in use during the Archaic period, since no related architectural remains have been found, it seems that the Korkyreans were familiar with the area and had realised the strategic importance of the site.

<sup>23</sup> Dakaris 1972, 32-35, 77, 104-105; Hammond 1967, 82-83. Pyrgos Ragiou and Forts A and B on the Lygia Peninsula (ancient Torone?), built according to the isodomic system, are considered to belong to the earliest Thesprotian fortifications.

This could be further supported on the basis of nine female figurines found in trial trenches in the south-eastern part of the fort,<sup>24</sup> dated between the early sixth and mid-fifth centuries BC (Figs. 5b, d-g). They all belong to predominantly Corinthian types: standing women with chiton<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 5b), seated woman on a throne wearing peplos<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 5d) and female heads with polos<sup>27</sup> (Figs. 5e-g), well known from many other sites in Corfu and Epirus.

## Mastilitsa

The low hill of Mastilitsa is located to the north of the new river mouth of Kalamas, in the middle of the deltaic plain (Fig. 1). Here recent excavations<sup>28</sup> have brought to light a building of the late seventh and sixth centuries BC and part of a Late Archaic cemetery.

The building (Fig. 6a) is located on a summit at the southern part of the hill. It is rectangular in plan (14 x 10 m) with an east to west orientation, comprising a central room (9 x 5 m), probably an open courtyard, surrounded by four narrow wings, which were roofed. Further to the east a small rectangular construction was excavated, which seems to have been used as an altar or sacrificial pyre.

The above example represents for Thesprotia, if not for Epirus as a whole, the earliest building related to religious activities.<sup>29</sup> The finds, however, do not provide us with sufficient information concerning the character of the cult. Among the most representative objects we should mention Corinthian vases, such as two globular aryballoi<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 6b) and a conical oinochoe<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 6c), decorative metal applications (Fig. 6e), a golden

<sup>24</sup> Preka-Alexandri 1988, 353-356, pl. 200δ-ε.

<sup>25</sup> For the type of that figurine, which is similar to those from Mastilitsa and Neochori, see Dontas 1964, 327 (MR 370), pl. 371a and *supra* n. 20.

<sup>26</sup> For parallels, see Blinkenberg 1931, 530-531, 533-534, pl. 100 (no. 2196), pl. 101 (nos. 2202-2203), dated around 525-400 BC; Bonias 1998, pl. 37 (no. 280, MΓ 419), dated around 460/450 BC.

<sup>27</sup> For the figurine of Fig. 5e, see Bonias 1998, 76, 183, pl. 42 (no. 318, MΓ 174), dated around 500/490 BC; Tzouvara-Souli 1992, pl. 78 from Koudonotrypa (Arta Museum no. 294). For a parallel to the figurine of Fig. 5f, see an Attic figurine from Sounion, dated to the first half of the sixth century BC (Sotiriadis-Sedgwick 1939, 32, pl. I 6γ). For the figurine of Fig. 5g, see Higgins 1969, 161, pl. 77 (no. 593), mainly for its facial features. For the female figurines, either standing or seated on a throne, wearing polos and holding various symbols, as well as for their connection with the Corinthian cult of Aphrodite, see Tzouvara-Souli 1992, 166-169.

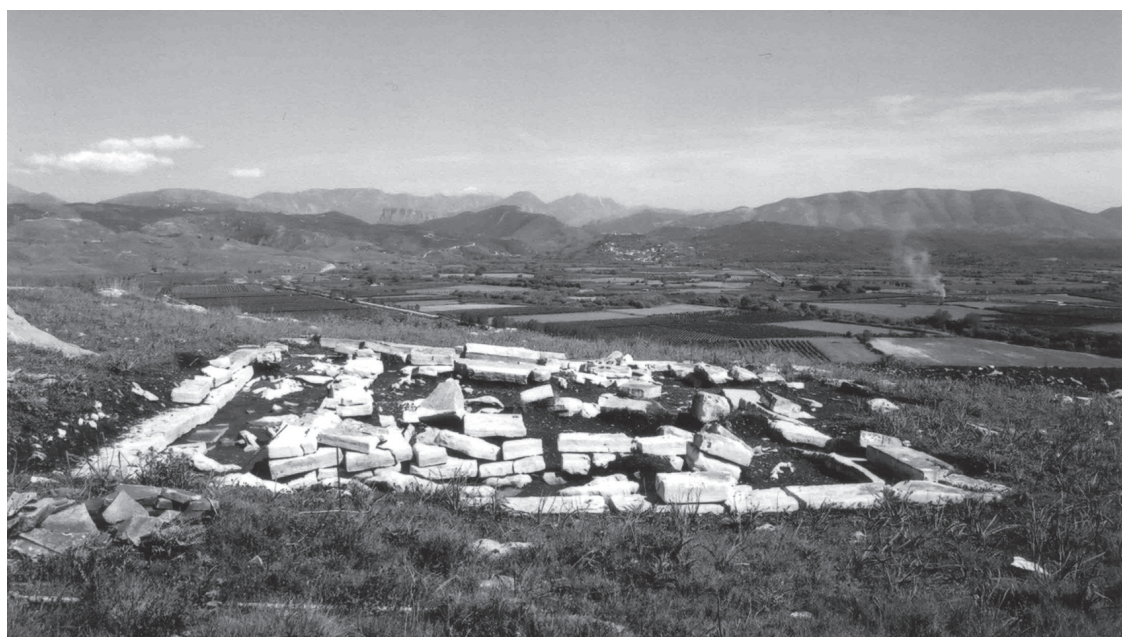
<sup>28</sup> Rescue excavation was carried out in 2000-2001 by A. Tzortzatou and A. Christophilopoulou under the supervision of G. Riginos. For a preliminary overview of the research see *ArchDelt* 55-56 (2000-2001), Χρονικά (in press); Christophilopoulou 2005, 195-196; Riginos 2005, 65-67.

<sup>29</sup> The temple of Ambrakia is, e.g., dated around 500 BC or in the third quarter of the fifth century BC (Tzouvara-Souli 1992, 42-43). The two ellipsoid buildings A & B, on the site of "Ampelia" (Meropi, Pogoni), dated to the Late Bronze Age but used also during the seventh century BC (Andreou 2005), constitute a unique case with regard to their architectural plan, as well as to their location in the interior of the settlement. Moreover, their connection with religious activities remains elusive. In the Nekyomanteion of Acheron there are only indications of an Archaic sanctuary or depository (some figurines and sherds of the seventh to fifth centuries BC), but no early architectural remains (Vokotopoulou 1982, 77, n. 1; Dakaris 1972, 78, n. 231; Dakaris 1993, 27).

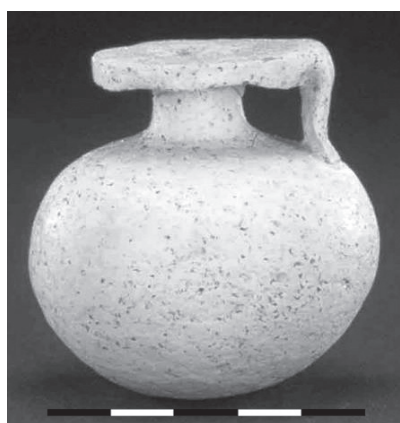
<sup>30</sup> An aryballos with similar shape was found at the excavation of Dikastikon Megaron Plot of Corfu (AE 24002, unpublished), which on the basis of a counterpart from Corinth (Amyx and Lawrence 1975, 377, pl. 50:2) has been dated to the Early Corinthian period. For a similar shape and handle (although with a wider rim), see Vallet and Villard 1964, 62, pl. 47:1, dated to the Early Corinthian period. For a possible parallel of the Middle to Late Corinthian I period, see Kaltsas 1998, 132, pl. 149a.

<sup>31</sup> For a similar shape, see Boardman and Hayes 1966, 33, pl. 17:237, dated to the late sixth century BC (Late Corinthian period). For a possible Early Corinthian parallel, see Weinberg 1943, 44-45, pl. 22:146-147.

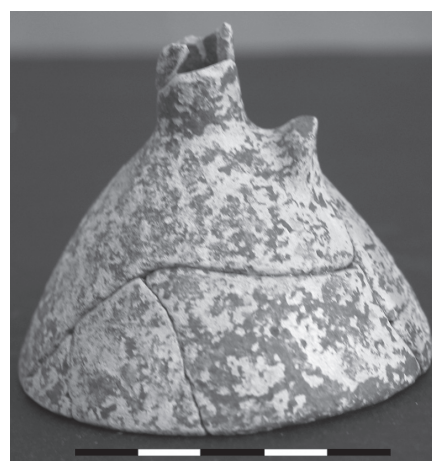




a



b



c



d



e

Fig. 6. The Archaic shrine of Mastilitsa (a) and characteristic finds (b-e).



Fig. 7. Attic pottery from the Late Archaic cemetery of Mastilita.

snake<sup>32</sup> and a relatively large number of weapons, mainly of iron (spearheads, daggers, arrowheads).<sup>33</sup> There were also found an antefix of a cover tile, decorated with floral palmettes in low relief<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 6d) and a fragment, probably a wing, from a terracotta sculpture.

The cemetery lies along the northern foot of the hill of Mastilita. Only part of it has been excavated,<sup>35</sup> comprising 21 simple cist-graves, organized in two large clusters, although individual graves were found amidst and around them. There was also one case of grave enclosure. Since most of the graves had been looted, we cannot get a full picture of the prosperity of the population. However, the few grave goods that were found, mainly vases, are undoubtedly recognized as Attic products. This reflects the intrusion of Athenian trade already from the early fifth century BC, which is a widespread phenomenon in Epirus.<sup>36</sup> All the vases were black-glazed and of good quality. The most

<sup>32</sup> It is part of an ornament, possibly from a pin. No close counterparts have been found for this object. For a silver pin with a head in form of a snake from Vitsa, dated around 480-470 BC, see Vokotopoulou 1986, 309, fig. 1161a (no. 2482/T. 67).

<sup>33</sup> The large number of weapons further supports the religious character of the building of Mastilita, since weapons and other metal objects are usually present in shrines of the Geometric and Archaic periods. See Andreou 2005, 62, note 55; Gravani 2005, 556-557.

<sup>34</sup> It belongs to the triangular, slightly pentagonal, type of antefix, characteristic of the first half of the sixth century BC, while the size ratio of the spiral to the palmette might indicate an earlier date (Kaltsas 1988, 19). For the shape see Thallon-Hill and Shaw King 1929, fig. 1; for the decoration *ibid.*, figs. 2 and 7. For the central spiral motif see a sherd in "Orientalizing" style from Megara Hyblaia (Vallet and Villard 1964, 160, pl. 170:7).

<sup>35</sup> The brief rescue excavation was conducted in 1998 by G. Riginos, with the participation of students and graduates of Demokritos University of Thrace.

<sup>36</sup> Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 23, 286; Dakaris 1971, 34-35; Pliakou 1999, 43. Similar grave goods have been found in excavations of the ancient cemeteries at Leukas (e.g. Douzougli 1994, 388-390).



interesting finds come from Graves 1 and 2: a kylix, decorated with a head of a satyr or gorgoneion in tondo<sup>37</sup> (Fig. 7a), a stemmed kylix<sup>38</sup> (Fig. 7b), a trefoil-mouthed jug with figure decoration within a metope<sup>39</sup> (Fig. 7c) and a lekythos with palmette decoration<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 7d).

The practice of inhumation in cist-graves was not widely used in Epirus and the Ionian islands during the Late Archaic and Early Classical periods. On the contrary, there is a preference for burials in stone sarcophagi and in rectangular pits occasionally dressed with stones or covered with tiles, as well as for inhumation in large pithoi.<sup>41</sup> The widespread use of inhumation in cist-graves in Mastilitsa may perhaps be explained by the fact that limestone was easily available at the site.<sup>42</sup>

The finds from the possible shrine and the cemetery, covering the period between the late seventh and early fifth centuries BC, indicate an organized community. As for the location of the Late Archaic settlement there are not yet sufficient archaeological data. We could, however, assume that the fortified settlement on the southwestern summit of the hill of Mastilitsa,<sup>43</sup> which was in use during the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods, was inhabited also during the Late Archaic period. Furthermore, the buildings detected inside the fortified settlement present many similarities, in their architectural details, to the Late Archaic shrine.

Which was, however, the character of that community on Mastilitsa? Were the people living here indigenous, or were they colonists and, in that case, where did they originate from? The presence of a possible shrine supports the view that the inhabitants of Mastilitsa were foreign settlers, considering that there are no buildings of that type in Epirus except in the Corinthian-Korkyrean colonies. In the colonies, the temples, although located inside the fortification walls, were usually detached from the main city,<sup>44</sup> as in the case of Mastilitsa. Besides, the Late Archaic settlement at Mastilitsa was probably not

<sup>37</sup> For a similar shape and decoration see *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, University of Reading, 1-GB 12, p. 17, pl. 10a-b, dated to the late sixth century BC.

<sup>38</sup> It belongs to Type C and is dated to the early fifth century BC. See Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 90, pl. 19:412.

<sup>39</sup> A female figure is discernible, on the move to the left, turning her head back to look at an animal, probably a horse, which she holds by the reins. For an oinochoe of similar shape, dated to the end of the sixth century BC, see *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, New Zealand, 1, pl. 18:4. For examples of the first quarter of the fifth century BC, of similar shape but with slightly different base, attributed to the Aimon's Painter, see Vokotopoulou 1986, 28, pl. 36 & fig. 75a (no. 2130/T. 67); Parlama and Stambolidis 2003, 316 (no. 319/Tp. 449).

<sup>40</sup> It is a common type of Athenian lekythos, dated to the first half of the fifth century BC. Regarding its decoration it could be attributed to the workshops of the Aimon's Painter and Megaira's Painter. For similar shape and decoration see Vokotopoulou *et al.* 1985, 49-50 (no. 68); Romiopoulou and Touratsoglou 2002, 93-94 (III666).

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. for Ambrakia: Petropoulos 1987, 318; Andreou 1998, 183, n. 142; for Leukas: Kalligas 1969, 278; Douzougli 1990, 251-254; Douzougli 1992a, 278-281; Douzougli 1992b, 286-288; Douzougli 1994, 388-390; Andreou 1998, 183; for Corfu: Preka-Alexandri 1994, 33; for various sites at Ioannina Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 21, 35-36, 93, 119, 288. Cist and shaft graves were common in the area of Kassopaia from the Late Archaic period onwards (Dakaris 1971, 176). Cist-graves of the fifth and fourth century BC, which contained exclusively Athenian vases together with local pottery, have been found in Kerasson and Michalitsi of Preveza (Dakaris 1971, 35).

<sup>42</sup> The hill of Mastilitsa is rich in good-quality limestone sources, whose characteristics resemble those of the marble (Vidaki and Papaioannou 1980). There are also indications of ancient quarrying sites in the area.

<sup>43</sup> Preka-Alexandri 1989, 316; Sarras 1998, 204-205.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Andreou 1998, 174-175, n. 89; Preka-Alexandri 1994, 26-28; Spetsieri-Choremi 1991, 7, pl. 2.



fortified during its early stage, since none of the known Corinthian or Elean colonies were enclosed with fortification walls until the fifth century BC.<sup>45</sup>

The strategic location of the hill matches the general criteria which seem to have dictated the selection of the sites for the establishment of all early colonies in Epirus:<sup>46</sup> it commands the northern straits of Corfu, has good communication with the hinterland via the river Kalamas, and is located close to rich natural resources, such as the alluvial plain and the coastal marine ecosystems.

However, the question concerning the origin of the settlers still remains open, since there is no sound historical or archaeological evidence for the identification of Mastilitsa with a Corinthian or Korkyrean colony. As a matter of fact Mastilitsa is located on the very borderline between Thesprotia and Chaonia, which represented two distinct spheres of influence, the Corinthian and the Korkyrean, respectively.<sup>47</sup>

## Concluding remarks

On the basis of the new evidence, Thesprotia, since the eighth century BC, must have played an important role in the circulation and exchange of products and ideas along the Ionian coast and towards the hinterland of Epirus. It formed part of a wider geographical area which included Epirus, southern Albania and the Ionian islands, and where the conservative element of the indigenous population co-existed with the new cultural influences, as a result of colonization and the expansion of trade.

Further research, including intensive field surveys and excavations, will hopefully enlarge our knowledge and give answers to many of the questions concerning these centuries, which still remain poorly represented in the archaeological record of Thesprotia.

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<sup>45</sup> Characteristic are the examples of Apollonia (Balandier *et al.* 2005, 267), Ambrakia (Tzouvara-Souli 1992, 26-28, n. 13) and the Elean colonies (Dakaris 1971, 42, 50-52, 140-141).

<sup>46</sup> Andreou 1993, 91-92; Andreou 1998, 148, 150-152, n. 17; Dakaris 1971, 32, 49.

<sup>47</sup> Bakhuizen 1987, 190; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 286; Dakaris 1972, 77. Until the fifth century BC the river Kalamas marked the northern boundary between Thesprotia and Cestrine of Chaonia (Dakaris 1972, 4). We do not know where the Kalamas discharged in antiquity, but considering the several shifts in the river's course, it is possible that the river already at that time had two mouths, corresponding roughly to the modern ones (Hammond 1997, 26). In any case, the area of Mastilitsa was beyond the Thesprotian territory.

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