

Griechische Nekropolen

Heide Frielinghaus

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Panos Valavanis

(Hrsg.)

Neue Forschungen und Funde



5

BEITRÄGE ZUR

ARCHÄOLOGIE GRIECHENLANDS

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Herausgegeben von
Heide Frielinghaus und Jutta Stroszeck

Heide Frielinghaus – Jutta Stroszeck – Panos Valavanis (Hrsg.)

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VORWORT

In Griechenland hat sich dank systematischer Ausgrabungen wie auch durch Zufallsfunde die Zahl freigelegter Nekropolen(abschnitte) und Einzel-Gräber in den letzten Jahren deutlich vermehrt. Gleichzeitig wurden – unter Berücksichtigung z. B. von Bestattungsformen, Ritualen, Grabtypen, Grabkennzeichnung oder Beigaben-Sets – systematische Analysen größerer Einheiten vorangetrieben. In diesem Zusammenhang wurden u. a. die Charakterisierung bestimmter (sozialer) Gruppen, die Definition und Verbreitung gesellschaftlicher Leitbilder oder im Rahmen des Grabes zum Ausdruck kommende Unterwelts-Vorstellungen in den Blick genommen. Dennoch ist unsere Kenntnis der griechischen Grabwelt noch immer sehr fragmentarisch. So fehlen für viele Gebiete übergreifende, alle Informationen einbeziehende Analysen entweder gänzlich oder zumindest für bestimmte Zeitabschnitte, auch steht ein detaillierter, diachron aufgeschlüsselter Vergleich zwischen verschiedenen griechischen Poleis und Landschaften noch aus.

Erwachsen aus einem im November 2016 in Mainz veranstalteten Kolloquium, trägt der hier vorgelegte Band zu zwei Bereichen der breit gefächerten Desiderata bei. Unter Berücksichtigung neuester Funde – die teils in eine weitreichendere Analyse einbezogen werden, teils im Zentrum von weiterführenden Überlegungen stehen – werden zum einen einige größere geographische Einheiten über einen gewissen Zeitraum hin betrachtet und zum anderen Gräber in den Blick genommen, die sich mit bestimmten sozialen Gruppen verbinden lassen, eine spezifische Ausstattung besitzen oder lokale Besonderheiten aufweisen.

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**EXCAVATING AT SKYROS AND PURIFYING DELOS:
ATHENIAN ›ARCHAEOLOGICAL‹ ADVENTURES AND
INTERPRETATIONS IN THE 5TH CENTURY BC AEGEAN**

Introduction

The study of tombs and cemeteries has been very important to Greek archaeology especially over the last thirty years¹. Demography studies, contextual approaches and quantitative methods² deriving from the analysis of mortuary evidence, allowed archaeologists to question how the discipline was used by classicists, ancient and art historians³. Greek archaeology cannot, or should not function anymore as a mere tool for proving or disproving historical and mythological information. This, on the other hand, does not mean that archaeologists should ignore ancient literary sources, whenever available, in their effort to study an ancient society. After all, »the crucial issue is not the presence or absence of writing but the density, quality and variety of data points«⁴. Bearing this in mind, the present paper will hopefully demonstrate that there are still many different and unexplored aspects in the study of ancient texts that archaeologists should seriously consider.

However, tombs and cemeteries are important not only to archaeologists. Ancient Greeks, for example, had established many different and complex relations and behaviours towards tombs older than them. As suggested by modern research⁵ there were various ancestor and hero cults practised in tholos and chamber tombs in many regions of the Greek Mainland and the Aegean. Well known examples of cult activity in the 6th century BC are to be found in the two tholos tombs at Thorikos⁶ excavated by Stais⁷ and Servais⁸. Regarding the identity of the occupants of these old tombs De Polignac claims that »the Greeks when they opened up a tomb in order to deposit offerings they should have had no idea of the true identity of the occupants, since the whole point was to confer upon them a heroic identity derived from the myths of their region...«⁹.

1 I would like to thank Heide Frielinghaus and Panos Valavanis for their comments and questions during the conference presentation of this paper. I am grateful to Panagiotis Hadjidakis for a discussion we had on the topography of Rheneia. Jean-Charles Moretti, Pavlos Karvonis, Antonios Kotsonas, and an anonymous referee made important contributions on earlier drafts of this paper. Finally, I would like to thank Debra-Ann Politi for the proofreading of an earlier draft.

2 Morris 1987; Whitley 1991.

3 Snodgrass 1987, 36–66; Morris 2000, 3–33; Whitley 2001, xxi–xxii.

4 Morris 2000, 7.

5 Coldstream 1976; Clairmont 1983; Whitley 1994; Antonaccio 1995; Boehringer 2001.

6 Whitley 1994, 98; Antonaccio 1995, 109; Boehringer 2001, 47–131.

7 Stais 1890, 160.

8 Servais 1965, 9–13.

9 De Polignac 1995, 139 f.

The opening of a tomb, however, was not a simple operation. The methods, if there were any, employed by the Greeks for such undertakings remain largely unrecognised in modern scholarship. What it is known is the outcome of such incidents: there were cases where such discoveries were used as a mean of propaganda for political control or territorial expansion. Examples *par excellence* of such propaganda are the stories of the discoveries of the bones of Orestes and Theseus. Shortly after the discovery and acquisition of those bones by the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians, Tegea and Skyros came under the firm control of Sparta and Athens respectively¹⁰. Apart from the relic itself, the location of a tomb attributed to a specific hero was also a matter of great significance¹¹. In fact, its importance can only be compared to the significance of the location of the temples as far as the appropriation of a territory and the establishment between the previous and the new masters of the land is concerned¹².

It has been argued that such investigations made by ancient people are not related to the modern concept of Archaeology¹³. Schnapp¹⁴ claims that ancient Greeks and Romans were largely not interested in such undertakings. However, a loose link between modern archaeology and classical Athens cannot be entirely dismissed. Schnapp¹⁵ himself makes a reference to Plato's evolutionary development: the philosopher had attempted to interpret the presence of fossils or other objects discovered in the soil from the perspective of prior human activity¹⁶. Thucydides¹⁷, in his introduction to the history of the Peloponnesian war analyses how ancient objects and cultures can be compared ethnographically with contemporary people when he claims that Greeks in the remote past carried weapons, in their everyday life, as the barbarians did in his time. One must not omit Thucydides' comparison between Athens and Sparta is based on the future survival of their monuments¹⁸. Regarding the ›archaeological‹ approach of Thucydides, Cook¹⁹ argues that »Ancients were not very accurate in their use of archaeological evidence. But they may have used it more often than we commonly suppose«.

This paper explores how ancient Athenians perceived and interpreted past mortuary evidence outside Attica in the 5th century BC. An attempt is made to investigate if there was any systematisation or protocol involved in the process of digging out old tombs. Two case-studies are cited, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the 5th century: the first is the discovery of ›Theseus's bones‹ in Skyros by Cimon, sometime between 476/475 and 471/470 BC, and the second is the final purification of Delos in 426/425 BC. These two case studies have been chosen because there is archaeological evidence available from modern investigations which can be used in conjunction with historical testimonies. These case stu-

10 Antonaccio 1995, 266; De Polignac 1995, 140.

11 De Polignac 1995, 140.

12 De Polignac 1995, 140.

13 Schnapp 1996, 13–32; Trigger 2007, 40–48.

14 Schnapp 1996, 73.

15 Schnapp 1996, 26. See also: Hahn 2010, for a detailed account on the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander and archaeology.

16 Pl. Prt 322 a–b; Lg. III, 677e–678a, 678c–d.

17 Th. 1, 2, 2; 1, 6, 2.

18 Th. 1, 10, 3.

19 Cook 1955, 269.

dies have also been discussed by Osborne²⁰, who focusses on the heroic status of Theseus *vis-à-vis* the anonymous Delians at Rheneia. A reason that the present paper analyses the Athenian behaviour towards older tombs outside Attica is that because of political disputes and/or family ties, Athenians might have had a different approach towards older burial monuments in their own homeland. Aristotle²¹ for example, mentions the destruction of the tombs and the scattering of the bones of certain members of Alkmeonid family in the late 7th/early 6th century BC (*pl.* 3).

First case-study: Cimon's discovery of Theseus at Skyros

In the year 476/5 BC, only a few years after the last battle against the Persians at Mycale, the Athenians were in the process of creating an empire, the first democracy in history to do so, but they still needed allies. The first step of this process was the Delian League and Skyros, for a series of reasons also supposedly implicating some pirate activity²², had to be conquered and eventually colonised. The Athenian general in charge was Cimon, son of Miltiades, the victor of the first battle against the Persians at Marathon (490 BC).

While on the island of Skyros, probably around 473 BC or a bit later²³, he heard of an oracle saying that the Athenians should seek out the bones of Theseus who had been killed in Skyros²⁴. »...Cimon took the island, as I have related in his Life, and being ambitious to discover the grave of Theseus, saw an eagle in a place where there was the semblance of a mound, pecking, as they say, and tearing up the ground with his talons. By some divine ordering he comprehended the meaning of this and dug there, and there was found a coffin of a man of extraordinary size, a bronze spear lying by its side, and a sword. When these relics were brought home on his trireme by Cimon, the Athenians were delighted, and received them with splendid processions and sacrifices, as though Theseus himself were returning to his city«²⁵.

Other ancient authors make a slightly different use of the oracle saying that Skyros would only be conquered if Theseus's bones were discovered²⁶. Even if it is not absolutely clear whether Cimon discovered the bones shortly before, or after the fall of Skyros, or when Apollo gave his oracle, it is clear that Cimon had made a very interesting discovery and he took advantage of it to enhance his political career. He returned to Athens with the bones of Theseus and established or reinforced the cult of the legendary king with a new sanctuary in the centre of Athens²⁷. The discovery had many important consequences: revenge on the part of

20 Osborne 2010.

21 Arist. Ath. Fr. 6–ii.I.

22 De Souza 1999, 29 f.

23 Podlecki 1971, 142.

24 Plut. Cim. 8.

25 Plut. Thes. 36, translation in English by Bernadotte Perrin.

26 Paus. 3, 3, 7.

27 Walker 1995, 22.

Athenians for the assassination of their legendary king by Lykomedes of Skyros, conquest and colonisation of the island, and the formal adoption (slightly later) by the Athenians of Theseus as their most important hero. At the same time, with this act, Cimon surpassed his rival Themistocles in glory and popularity²⁸, something essential for success in Athenian politics.

Plutarch, writing about 500 years after Cimon, provides some valuable information concerning possible archaeological evidence: Cimon discovered a *theke* after excavating the earth. In ancient Greek, *theke* means both chest and coffin, but is used mostly for describing a burial vault, grave or tomb. The above translation in English, as »coffin«, might be a bit narrow²⁹. Inside the *theke* was a large skeleton accompanied by a bronze sword and a dagger. Parlama³⁰ claims that if Plutarch's story were true, then the *theke* could have been the typical cist tomb of the late Mycenaean period, and the Mycenaean presence on Skyros is undeniable. There is evidence of cist tombs of the Mycenaean period on Skyros but unfortunately not from published excavations but from descriptions of farmers who had accidentally discovered pottery in them³¹.

Chamber tombs, on the other hand, have a much more substantial presence in the archaeological record of Bronze Age Skyros. At least five chamber tombs were discovered during the first half of the 20th century, but all of them were thoroughly looted³². The first undisturbed chamber tomb was discovered and excavated in 1993³³. Cist tombs from later periods, however, have been discovered in Skyros especially from the Protogeometric and later periods³⁴. In fact, inhumation in cist tombs is predominant, if not the sole, burial practice throughout the Early Iron Age on this island (*pl.* 4).

Additionally, in relatively nearby areas on the mainland, such as Nea Ionia, Volos, west of Skyros, there are cist tombs identical to the one described by Plutarch for Theseus. In this area, Theochares discovered at least fifteen cist tombs dated from 1450 to 1375 BC³⁵. According to the excavator, Tombs 6 and 18 held the mortuary remains of warriors because, in addition to the skeletons (each tomb was used for two successive burials) and the few pots, they also discovered two bronze blades and a sword. East of Skyros, on the island of Psara, Charitonides also excavated a series of cist tombs dating to Late Helladic IIIB in the locality of Archontiki, and he was given a bronze dagger discovered in the same area by farmers³⁶. One could well imagine, based on these examples, that it is not impossible that Cimon had discovered a Late Bronze Age cist tomb.

28 Podlecki 1971, 141.

29 See for example Hdt. 3, 37, 1.

30 Parlama 1984, 139, 7. 340.

31 Parlama 1984, 340.

32 Parlama 1984, 135.

33 Sapouna-Sakellarakis 2002, 119; Pharantos 2003/2004, 11–104.

34 Lemos 2002, 169.

35 Theochares – Theochares 1970, 198–212; Parlama 1984, 139, 7. 340.

36 Charitonides 1961/1962, 266; Parlama 1984, 139, 7. 340; Archontidou et al. 2012, 269.

What made Cimon then assign such a ›tomb‹ so easily to Theseus? If Cimon had heard the Iliad, a fact which was very likely for a man of his class and education, he would have known that Homeric heroes were cremated and that they used bronze weapons. He would probably also know that Theseus had lived a generation before the events of the Trojan War. So Cimon might have suspected that the generation of heroes before the Trojan War used the rite of inhumation.

Regarding the bronze weapons and their association with a distant past, there were many reasons for the Athenians to think that their ancestors used such weapons: there was Homer and the bronze and heroic races of Hesiod. There were also chamber tombs that had been discovered in the Geometric and Archaic periods in Attica and then rediscovered by archaeologists in the modern era. In such cases an ancient Athenian would have found inhumations accompanied by bronze weapons. The reorganisation that took place in cemeteries, such as the Kerameikos or the construction of public buildings in the greater area of Agora could well have revealed earlier burials³⁷.

There is an example of an accidental discovery of a Late Helladic II-III chamber tomb in the early 5th century BC contemporary with Cimon's discovery of »Theseus«. The tomb lies underneath the north side of the foundations of the Temple of Ares toward its west end³⁸ and it was disturbed by the construction of this temple. The temple was first constructed in the late 5th century BC outside Athens, probably in Pallene and it was dismantled, transported and rebuilt in the area of the Agora in the Augustan period³⁹. However, before the construction of the temple there was another incident: »Apparently, workmen engaged in some new construction shortly after the end of the Persian Wars cut into the southwest corner of the tomb; a deposit of seven fifth-century lekythoi was found in a shallow pit in the bedrock below the knees of skeleton VII«⁴⁰. Skeleton VII was found without weapons by the archaeologists, but the broken tip of a bronze spear or sword and several arrowheads were found about a metre from skeleton VII. Those bronze arms were probably associated with skeleton VIII⁴¹. Additionally, the discovery of a skeleton buried with weapons must have been of some interest, if not considered odd, since, despite the increasing warfare of the late Archaic and Classical periods, no weapons of any kind were deposited in graves after 735 BC⁴².

It seems then that 5th century Athenians had some experience in the discovery of old tombs and bronze weapons. This may suggest that what Cimon presented to them was a burial of a pre-Trojan-War hero, in terms they could understand. Even if everything in Cimon's story was nothing more than a coincidence or a fabrication one cannot fail to think that the Athenian general, by using his philological knowledge, his observation, his possible knowledge of burial structures and rites and a bit of what we would call in archaeological theory, direct interpretation, came up with a serendipitous identification of someone who

37 Antonaccio 1995, 119–121, n. 448.

38 Townsend 1955, 187–219.

39 Korres 1992–1998, 83–104.

40 Townsend 1955, 195 f., nos. 39–45, fig. 3, pl. 77.

41 Townsend 1955, 197.

42 Van Wees 1998, 341.

might have lived in the times of the mythical Athenian king, who had died at Skyros and who had been buried as a warrior. This is not a very different interpretation indeed from that of Theochaeres »warrior's burial« cited above.

Further, the pursue of dead famous individuals it is something that still exists in modern scholarship. In 2013 it was officially announced that the mortuary remains discovered beneath a car park in Leicester belonged to Richard III⁴³, the king immortalised by Shakespeare. Soon after, on 17 January 2014, a fragment of the pelvis of King Alfred the Great, the most celebrated leader of the Anglo-Saxon resistance against the Danes in the 9th century AD, was the next discovery in the UK⁴⁴. On 29 January 2014, there was a press conference regarding the authenticity of the bones of Charlemagne located in Aachen Cathedral in Germany⁴⁵. In the following weeks, the municipality of Madrid announced the beginning of an investigation to locate the grave of Miguel de Cervantes, creator of Don Quixote, in the premises of a nunnery in the Spanish capital⁴⁶.

Second case-study: Athenians ›Excavating‹ at Delos

The second case-study, an incident that occurred 50 years after the ›discovery‹ of Theseus' relics, is still related to the adventures of the Athenians in the Aegean and to the Delian League. From the establishment of this league, the island of Delos became one of the richest places in Mediterranean acting as the treasure house of the league of the unofficial Athenian empire. Later, in 426/425 BC, after a third outbreak of the plague in Athens during the Peloponnesian war, Athenians decided that they had to purify the sacred island as the god Apollo had dictated. This would be the second purification of this island after the one undertaken by Peisistratos in 543 BC who had dug out all the tombs around the temple of Apollo. This time, however, the purification was general: »All the sepulchers of the dead that there were in Delos they removed and proclaimed that thereafter no one should either die or give birth to a child on the island, but should first be carried over to Rheneia«⁴⁷ (*pl.* 5).

During this massive ›urgent excavation‹, Athenians, probably with the aid of the locals, made an attempt to assign burials to specific people and ethnicities. They identified the Carians who, according to Thucydides, controlled the island before King Minos. What was the kind of evidence used in order to proceed to those identifications? The ancient historian is very explicit explaining to his contemporary audience that the identification of the Carians was made by the distinctive weapons and the way they were buried. In fact, the historian claims that more than half of the tombs belonged to the Carians: »...when Delos was purified

43 Buckley et al. 2013, 518 f.

44 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/17/alfred-the-great-edward-elder-remains-found-winchester>.

45 <http://www.thelocal.de/20140131/charlemagne-bones-proven-genuine-1200-years-later>.

46 http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2014/02/18/madrid/1392753647_316491.html.

47 Th. 3, 104, 1–2, transl. in English by Foster Smith.

by the Athenians in this war – and the graves of all who had ever died on the island were removed, over half were discovered to be Carians, being recognized by the fashion of the armour found buried with them, and by the mode of burial, which is that still in use among them»⁴⁸.

Thucydides does not explain the Athenian motives for the purification, even if most modern historians note the irony and the slight sarcasm when he refers to Apollo's oracle⁴⁹. For modern scholars, the Athenian purification at Delos is no more than a cruel act dictated either by religious motives and superstition related to the plague that had struck Athens once more or by a specific political move to persuade all the islanders of the Aegean not to abandon the Athenians in favour of the Spartans⁵⁰. There are also historians who maintain that Thucydides himself was either in charge or present at this purification⁵¹. After this event, an old celebration in honour of Apollo was revived and the Athenian general Nicias was put in charge of it. For Hornblower⁵² the establishment of the New *Delia* celebration is the real motive for the purification of Delos, revealing the effort of Athens »to bring Ionian cult within her control«. One should not forget that the construction of the Athenian temple in Delos dedicated to Apollo probably began in the same year 425/6 BC⁵³ (*pl. 6, 1*).

Diodorus⁵⁴ explains that the Athenians transferred the remains to the island of Rheneia. In 1898, on the island of Rheneia at Agia Kyriaki bay, Stavropoulos⁵⁵ excavated a rectangular enclosure full of bones, debris, potsherds, sarcophagi and stone slabs, which he identified as the resting place of those remains. He discovered a rectangular pit which was cut and levelled into a sloping rocky surface with three supporting walls measuring 21.8 m (east wall) 21.6 m (south wall) and 23 m (north wall). The western side, measuring c. 21.9 m, had been left open without a supporting wall, or the wall had long been destroyed without leaving any trace. The area of the pit was a bit less than 500 sq m⁵⁶. The fill of the pit had been partially disturbed: there were several different deposits but their stratigraphic relationships are not entirely clear. The pit had been divided into three sectors. In two of these, stone sarcophagi were placed side by side: twenty-five in the western side of the pit near the NW corner and four more in a separate group in the SE corner (layer 1) (*pl. 6, 2*).

In the third sector, between these two groups of sarcophagi and apparently at the same depth as their upper parts, about 0.50 m from the surface, there was a series of small rectangular compartments made up of stone slabs and separated in rows by upright slabs (layer 2). Grave goods and pottery were discovered in each compartment. Rhomaïos⁵⁷ claims that these compartments probably represented or imitated the context of the excavated tombs from Delos. One may assume then that these compartments were reserved for the relocated

48 Th. 1, 8, 1–2, transl. in English by Foster Smith.

49 Gomme 1956, 414; Borimir 1986, 137.

50 Borimir 1986, 137.

51 Hornblower 1992, 169–197.

52 Hornblower 1992, 196.

53 Courby 1931, 205.

54 D. S. 12.58.

55 Stavropoulos 1898, 100–104; 1899, 66–69.

56 Stavropoulos 1898, 102.

57 Rhomaïos 1929, 86–88.

cremations because in one of them, formed of three slabs in a triangle was discovered a red-figure pelike containing cremated bones. Stavropoulos named this compartment tomb Γ⁵⁸. Pursuing a similar line of thought, Boardman describes this deposit as an attempt by the Delians to keep the remains and offerings of each burial separate after removal⁵⁹.

Below the stone compartments, the whole of the third was covered by stone slabs which Cook⁶⁰ calls a stone pavement (layer 3). In the lowest level, below this pavement, were placed bones covered with debris, ashes and potsherds (layer 4). This layer was approximately 0.16m thick but did not extend below the twenty-nine sarcophagi in the other two sectors. It was also packed hard as a result of the pressure from the stone slabs situated immediately above it. A reason for this spatial arrangement inside the pit could be the presence of different burial rites since one can see evidence for both cremations and inhumations as shown by the cremation urn in tomb Γ and the sarcophagi.

The lowest thick deposit, composed mainly of bone debris and ashes, was, according to Rhomaios⁶¹, nothing more than what remained from the Peisistrateian purification, though no comparison between the pottery of the different deposits was ever made. This could mean that the Athenians, during the purification of 425 BC, had discovered the previous purification pit or deposit of Peisistratos and that they also transported its contents to the new pit at Rheneia.

At least 2068 pots were discovered in the pit, dating between 800 to 425 BC and originating from many different regions such as Athens, Corinth, Rhodes, Melos, Phoenicia, Naucratis etc. The only exception is a Mycenaean pyxis (LHIII A–B). Stavropoulos, until his sudden death in 1919, dedicated himself to the meticulous study of the pottery, among all his other duties as *Ephor* of Antiquities for Delos and Mykonos, but he did not publish a detailed account of the finds. This task was undertaken by Rhomaios but again without a complete catalogue of the finds. There are later typological studies concerning the pottery recovered from the pit⁶² but no general publication of all the finds. The discovery of the twenty-nine stone sarcophagi was interpreted by Stavropoulos as belonging to deceased people whose bodies had not already been decomposed at the time of the purification⁶³.

Rhomaios⁶⁴ without denying the cruelty of the purification and exhumation of the Delians by the Athenians, observes that those who carried out this labour were very careful and there is no doubt that the Delians assisted the Athenian soldiers or slaves in order to ensure the best possible treatment of their ancestors. Hadjidakis⁶⁵, following Stavropoulos⁶⁶, claims that the evidence for this robbery is the absence of valuable metal objects from the

58 Rhomaios 1929, 190 f.

59 Kurtz – Boardman 1971, 198.

60 Cook 1955, 268.

61 Rhomaios 1929, 197.

62 Dugas – Rhomaios 1934; Dugas – Rhomaios 1935; Dugas 1952; Zaphiropoulou 2003.

63 Stavropoulos 1898, 102 f.

64 Rhomaios 1929, 189.

65 Hadjidakis 2003, 34.

66 Stavropoulos 1899, 69 n. 1.

purification pit. Small finds, however, are not absent from the pit. At least 50 iron sickles, a small golden double axe, 30 6th-century female terracotta figurines, a couple of iron daggers, fragments of 14 bronze phialae, and bronze handles of four kylikes and an oinochoe were uncovered⁶⁷.

From the moment that the pit was discovered and attributed to the Athenians and their purification, most scholars became interested in how they would explain Thucydides' comment regarding the Carian burials. The sociological aspect of this act (exhumation and transport of mortuary remains) both for the Athenians and the Delians, was largely ignored by those scholars. As far as the graves resembling Carian tombs are concerned, all authors pointed out the external similarities between Bronze Age chamber tombs and Classical chamber tombs at Caria. Long⁶⁸ for example analyses this matter putting emphasis on ›chamber tumuli‹ in the areas of Gökçeler and Burgaz Gheresi. According to this interpretation, the Athenians and presumably the Delians mistook the Mycenaean tombs for Carian tombs and for this reason the author claims that no Mycenaean objects, apart from a single pot, were discovered in the pit. Long also claims that all Mycenaean or ›Carian‹ objects were discarded and only the contents of the ›Greek‹ graves were preserved⁶⁹.

This would not explain how the prehistoric tombs of the Hyperborean Maidens (see below) remained intact. There are at least three possible explanations as to what happened to the Mycenaean tombs. The first is that all of them (apart from the two of the Hyperborean maidens) were destroyed during the purification of Peisistratos and only the bones ended up later at the purification pit of Rheneia (i. e. the thick packed lowest deposit) after they had been first placed in a pit at Delos in Peisistratid times. A second explanation could be that everything the Athenians thought was not Greek was dumped at sea⁷⁰. A third explanation is that there must be another purification pit at Rheneia as yet undiscovered. This is exactly what Stavropoulos was looking for during his last campaign at Rheneia⁷¹. However, given the amount of systematic excavation, as well as looting, on the island of Rheneia, this is not a strong possibility and most of the authors exclude it⁷².

As far as the Carian weapons are concerned, first Poulsen⁷³ and then Rhomaios⁷⁴ supported the theory that the 50 iron sickles discovered in the pit, could have been interpreted by the Athenians as Carian weapons. The sickle was a weapon often associated with barbarian soldiers. Certainly, the reason for the deposition of these objects could also be for ritual purposes (e. g. Artemis Orthia, Sparta), since there were places in Greece where sickles were discovered in classical tombs⁷⁵ although not in Athens. Boardman⁷⁶ suggested that those relatively small-

67 Rhomaios 1929, 210 f.

68 Long 1958, 301.

69 Long 1958, 301.

70 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1906, 76 f.; Plassart 1928, 49 f.; Long 1958, 299.

71 Stavropoulos 1899, 67; Vasilikou 2006, 39.

72 Rhomaios 1929, 189; Long 1958, 301; Cook 1955, 268.

73 Poulsen 1909, 31 f.

74 Rhomaios 1929, 217–223.

75 Cook 1955, 269.

76 Boardman 1971, 136 f.

size iron sickles had the function of strigils. Cook⁷⁷ on the other hand, offers a slightly different interpretation, arguing that Thucydides did not mean a specific weapon for the Carians (i. e. the sickle), but simply the presence of weapons in a tomb. For Cook, the Carians were nothing more than Greeks of the Geometric period since for them it was a custom to be buried with weapons, and Thucydides could not be accustomed to Geometric art since the Persian destruction of Athens had wiped out earlier dedications and monuments and 5th century Athenians no longer buried men with weapons⁷⁸. However, for the sons and grandsons of the Athenians who had seen Carians and Lycians as allies of Persia during Xerxes's campaigns carrying those or similar arms half a century before, it would have been obvious to associate the sickles with Carian weapons. Additionally, Herodotus⁷⁹ in describing the battle of Salamis in Cyprus in 493 BC mentions the Carian shield-bearer of prince Onesilus who cut off the two legs of the horse of the Persian commander Artybios with a single stroke using a *drepano* (sickle) (*pl. 7, 1*).

Discussion

Digging out human bones and rebury them elsewhere was not something usual for the Athenians or for the contemporary Greek world in general, especially at the end of the 5th century BC. This act must not be confused with successive or intrusive burials inside or around a tomb, or with the cult activity associated with an older tomb, because with these acts there is no destruction of the tomb, or transport of the dead a considerable distance from their previous burial location. It must not be confused either with the normal collection of bones from older tombs and their deposition in a bone deposit or ossuary⁸⁰. In the cases where funeral stelae and slabs have been reused for other purposes, this is related to a prior violent destruction of the cemetery or because of a major threat⁸¹.

Even in Delos itself and despite Thucydides affirmation, not all the burial structures were destroyed, nor were all the dead carried away: the two Bronze Age tombs attributed to the Hyperborean maidens⁸², a group of Late Geometric graves near the altar of Zeus Polieus⁸³ and a further group of Archaic cist graves attached to the sacred area of the Archegesion⁸⁴ remained intact. This happened either because the built burial structures and the graves simply escaped the Athenians's attention, or, more likely, because of their connection to a specific hero cult activity, as in the case of the Hyperborean maidens, the temple of Anios and the altar of Zeus⁸⁵.

77 Cook 1955, 269.

78 Cook 1955, 269.

79 Hdt. 5, 111–112.

80 Kurtz – Boardman 1971, 196 f.

81 Kurtz – Boardman 1971, 195.

82 Courby 1912, 63–74; Picard – Replat 1924, 253–260.

83 Gallet de Santerre 1958, 110.

84 Robert 1953, 8–40; Prost 1997, 785.

85 Chankowski 1998, 54 f.; Antonaccio 1995, 184. 218–221.

If an old tomb had to be destroyed and mortuary remains had to be carried away, it seems that there was a need for special authorisation. In all the known cases, the authority god was Apollo and the licence his oracles⁸⁶. Apollo himself sought purification after the killing of Pytho and *Καθάριστος* (the purifier) was one of his names⁸⁷. An example of the power of the Delphic oracle regarding exhumation and transportation of relics can be seen in the case of Cleisthenes of Sikyon: The powerful tyrant of the Late Archaic Period, being at war with Argos, wished to suppress the cult of the Argive hero Adrastos. He asked the permission of the Delphic oracle to destroy the shrine (tomb) of the hero located in Sikyon and expel him from the city. Apollo rejected this request strongly and Cleisthenes had to come up with an alternative, but ingenious plan, in order to minimize Adrastos' heroic status without expelling him⁸⁸.

As already mentioned, the Athenians must have been experienced in such special cases. There is a very interesting comment regarding Athenians claiming the island of Salamis from the Megarians in the time of Solon in the 6th century BC⁸⁹. The Megarians argued then that since multiple burial was practiced in Salamis just as it was in Megara, then the people of Salamis could not have been associated with the Athenians who practised single burials in the 6th century BC. The Athenians had a similar argument on grave orientation. The importance of this comment lies in the fact that the Athenians and the Megarians had conducted some sort of investigation regarding burial practices, not only in their region, but also at Megara, Athens and Salamis. This knowledge and consequent political behaviour clearly extended beyond religious and cult activities. Even if the claim of the Athenians was not real, the fact that they were able to use, as political argument, different burial customs, gives an idea of how seriously they perceived past burial practices and monuments.

In both case studies, there was an effort to identify and especially in that of Delos the tombs one by one and attribute them to different ethnicities. Why did this happen? One suggestion arising from the discussion above is that they wanted to rebury only the Greek relics and not the Carian and for this reason, they made this effort. However, if one assumes that to leave someone unburied (cf. the Treatment of Hector's corpse in Iliad, Odysseus' companions complaints in Hades about still being unburied, Antigone's struggle for her unburied brother) gave serious offence to the gods and to society, then one cannot easily accept this view. Perhaps the effort made to recognise the Delian dead was related to the religious respect for the dead or/and to the families of the deceased that the Athenians had to show during this process. One must not forget that at least some of the dead were probably Athenians who by that period had established a firm presence on the island.

The Athenians of the 5th century BC did not have the modern methodical, technological and theoretical tools for analysing and understanding an ancient tomb. What they had, however, was a series of examples of tombs from all previous periods and regions. Genealogy

86 Osborne 2010, 59. 71.

88 Hdt. 5, 67–68.

87 Dyer 1969, 40–43.

89 Long 1958, 299 commenting on Plut. Sol. X, 4–5.

was in many cases more than enough for them. This accumulated experience and »scientific freedom« probably gave them some knowledge to analyse and separate tombs into different categories and perhaps even periods. This system allowed them to have a certain perception of their past that was not only based on the epics, but also on the material remains. With the aid of epic tradition, historical testimonies and a big dose of curiosity, Athenians used burial remains for their own purposes. However, it seems that the most important tools they used were observation and direct comparison to evidence from other places (i. e. Caria) and some basic »typological« knowledge of weapons⁹⁰. It appears then that they used comparison more than epic tradition.

By comparing these two case studies and combining both historical and archaeological evidence one can trace some common patterns. The first has already been suggested, and it is that the oracle gave the official permission to proceed with the digging. The second is that in both cases it seems that the entire contents of the tomb, apart from the human remains, was transported. In the case of Theseus, the bronze weapons were transported, and in the case of Delos, the pots, the sickles, some jewellery and even the sarcophagi were shipped to Rheneia. A third similarity is that after transport to the new resting place, new cults or rituals were established to venerate the dead. In the case of Theseus it is clear that a hero cult was established or reinforced and a temple was constructed. In the case of Delos, however, identifying cult activity is more complicated. The graves of the heroes (i. e. Anios) and of the Hyperborean maidens remained at Delos and the feasting activities associated with these tombs continued. Stavropoulos did not find anything related to an ancestor cult of any kind (e. g. offering trenches) around the enclosure at Rheneia. One may claim though, that the purification pit held an honoured position in the development of a new cemetery. In fact, after 425 BC the pit became the central spot of the newly established cemetery of the Delians, and no secondary or intrusive burials were added to the enclosure⁹¹.

There are two other signs of cult activity in Rheneia. The first is the structure of the enclosure itself. This was not a simple pit with bones, ashes and potsherds dumped in it. It was a sophisticated structure composed of different compartments and deposits according to the different burial rites. For the Delians this structure could be a burial enclosure (*perivolos*) where their remote ancestors and their recent dead relatives were placed together. Thus this structure was a communal monument. Such structures were not common, but then again this purification was not at all common. Today only a part of the eastern wall survives from the enclosure of the pit at Rheneia. However, there are many remnants of destroyed walls from later burial enclosures around the pit, indicating that there was a very close association (and perhaps imitation) between the structure of the *vothros* and the later burial structures.

The second clue suggesting cult activity is the red-figure pelike from tomb Γ already mentioned which served as a cremation urn and which Rhomaios⁹² dated to between 450–440

90 Schnapp 1996, 26.

91 Rhomaios 1929, 192 f.

92 Rhomaios 1929, 191.

BC (*pl.* 7, 2). He admitted though, that it might well have been used at a later date in one of the last cremations that took place in Delos before the purification. In the belly of the vase is a round hole, 0.074 m in diameter. Rhomaios⁹³ interpreted this as facilitating *nekrolatreia*. He believed, however, that since no traces of the clay or wooden pipes required for the libation of liquids to the dead was found, that this activity took part only on Delos and not later at Rheneia. However, judging from the position of the pot which was placed inside one of the stone-slab compartments and thus in the upper stratum (deposit 2) of the pit, and the fact that it was recovered intact, one cannot overrule the possibility that such actions took place also at Rheneia (*pl.* 8).

Osborne, on the other hand, sees no evidence for cult activity in the case of the Delians at Rheneia⁹⁴. He describes the complex structure of the purification pit as a single pit. In fact, he considers that the lack of veneration is what differentiates the case of Theseus and his ›return‹ to Athens with the purification of Delos. Osborne does admit however that the bones of the Delians at Rheneia were treated with respect⁹⁵.

The similarities between the two case-studies allow the construction of a procedure, at least for the Athenians of the 5th century BC operating outside Attica, according to which the excavation of an old tomb (or tombs) could take place. This process may be separated into four stages:

1. Official or Divine Permission: The use of an oracle in order to proceed to the excavation.
2. Excavation: The careful digging of the tomb in order not to damage the relics.
3. Relocation: The transport of the human remains and associated objects to another place.
4. Veneration or Respect: The place where the remains were transported becomes a focus for cult activities or at least of absolute respect.

To the second stage, one may add that during the Athenian ›excavations‹ there was also an attempt at identification, both in the case of Theseus and of Delos. This identification, even if totally conjectural, may have been crucial for the treatment of the remains in the later stages of this process. Perhaps the arrangement of the different spaces and deposits inside the purification pit at Rheneia can be related to an earlier identification procedure or burial rite, as already suggested. In the third stage, there is another important parameter: the transport of the corpses which, at least according to the excavator, had not yet decomposed. In this case, it seems that the bodies were carried out in their sarcophagi. The transport of a stone sarcophagus or larnax is not an easy task, even in modern conditions because of their excessive weight. Back in the 5th century BC the effort of moving at least twenty-nine intact stone sarcophagi, (not to mention the rest of the stone slabs) from one island to the other would have been even harder even if the distance from the sacred harbour of Delos to the Agia Ky-

93 Rhomaios 1929, 191.

95 Osborne 2010, 58 n. 11.

94 Osborne 2010, 58.

riaki bay at Rheneia is less than a mile. This effort emphasises not only the importance but also the rarity of this practice.

Conclusion

There is an interesting bureaucratic resemblance between ancient and modern discoveries: the first thing that a 5th century Athenian needed in order to proceed to the digging of an old tomb was permission. Authority for granting such permission in that period rested not with the local archaeological service or a civil servant, but the god Apollo himself. This divine permission would allow an individual to proceed to what can be called ›official tomb digging‹. Attributing a tomb to a specific individual was also a serious matter. The successful identification of such an individual could dictate whether a whole region or an island could be conquered or not. The rare occurrence of official tomb digging activities must have been a direct consequence of the fact that old tombs could be powerful political tools and gods (or the rival cities) did not very often allow the cities to use them as such. For the same reason, additional knowledge and experience was required if someone had to dig out such a tomb. The association of a Bronze Age cist tomb at Skyros with Theseus, or the identification of iron sickles as Carian weapons might look oversimplified and opportunist to modern scholars, but for 5th century Athenians it was a very complicated process which allowed them to overcome practical difficulties, such as the distinction of different ethnicities or cultures by the examination of burial monuments and customs. To return to the introduction of this article, ancient Athenians probably did not have any idea about the true identity of the occupant when they opened an old tomb; this does not mean, at least in some cases, and for their own motives, that they did not try very hard to find out.

Vyron Antoniadis

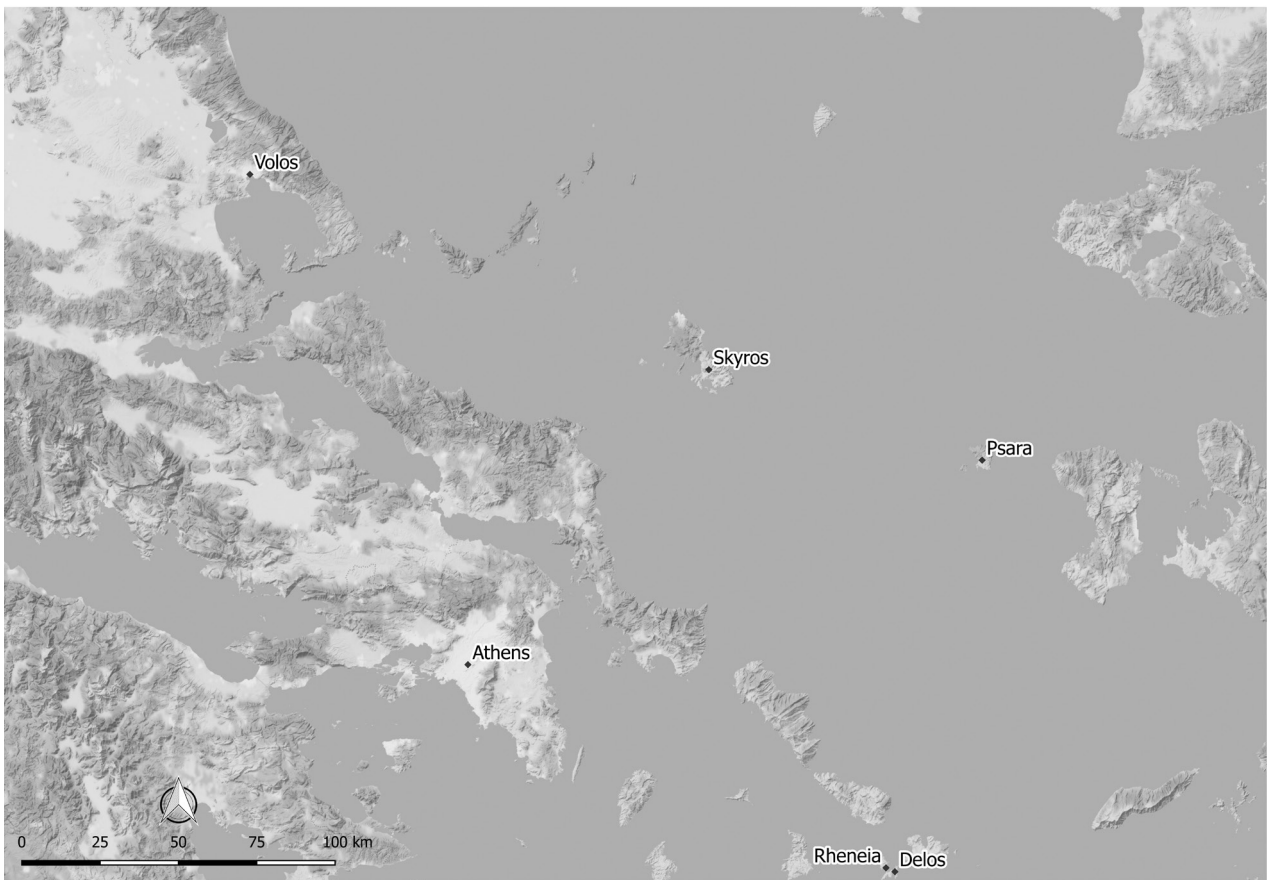
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Pls. 3, 5: Vyron Antoniadis (template by OSM). – *Pl. 4, 1, 2:* Theochares – Theochare 1970, 203 plan. 1; 200 fig. 6. – *Pl. 6, 1:* Vyron Antoniadis, photograph taken from Delos (Agora of Theophrastus). – *Pl. 6, 2:* Vyron Antoniadis, based on Rhomaios 1929, 187 fig. 2. – *Pls. 7, 1, 2; 8:* Rhomaios 1929, 213 fig. 20; 191 fig. 4; 187 fig. 2.

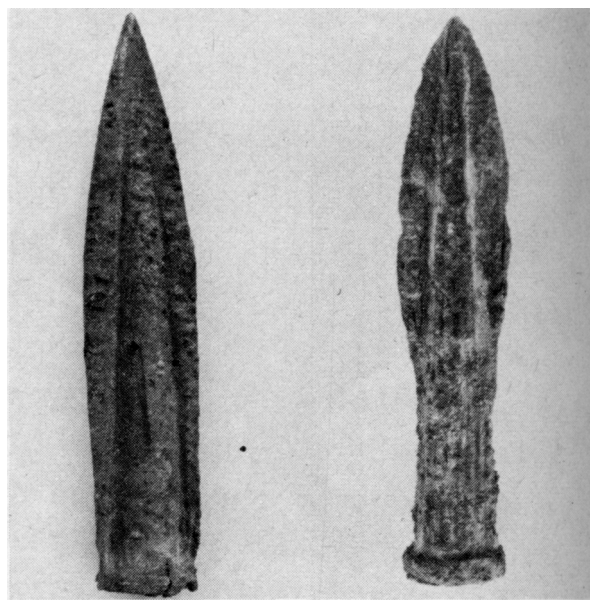
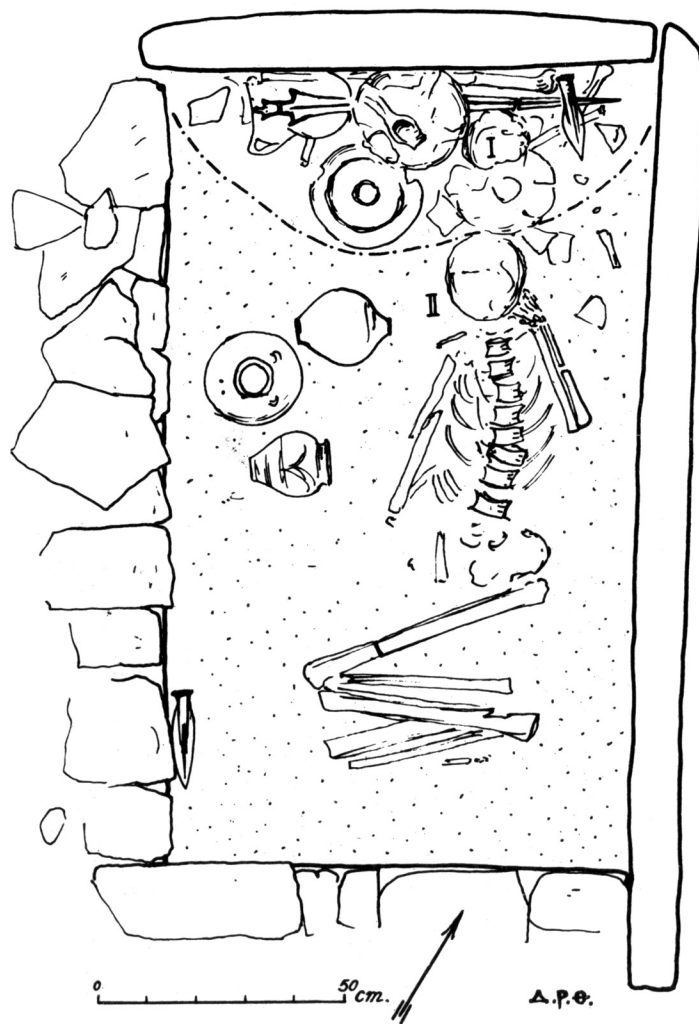
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1 Sites mentioned in the text



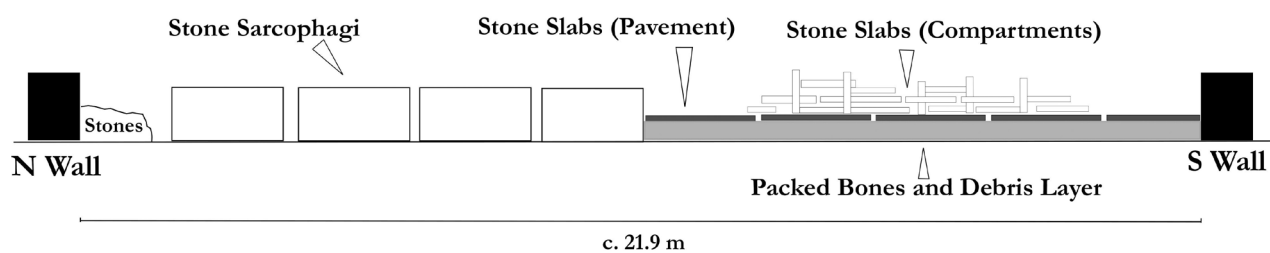
1. 2 Tomb 6 with burials I and II and the bronze spearheads. Nea Ionia, Volos



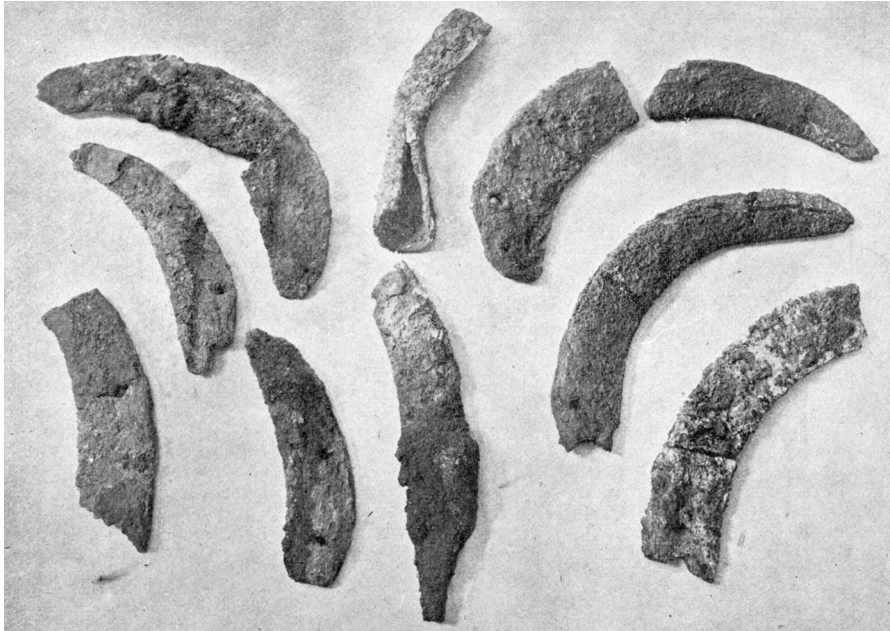
1 Delos, Rheneia and the purification pit



1 A view of the Agia Kyriaki Creek from the West. The purification pit is located on the seashore, west of the farmstead.



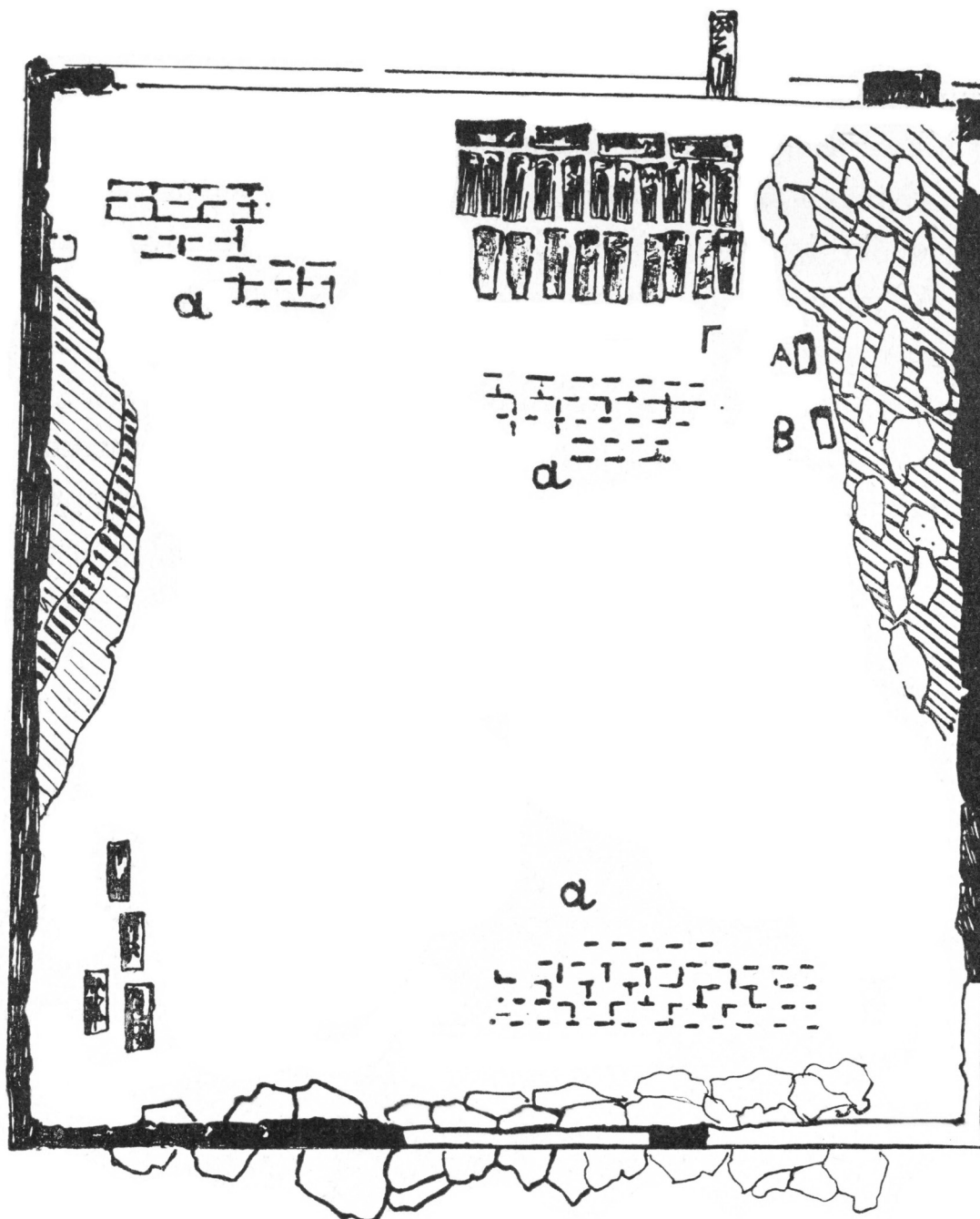
2 A schematic conceptual section of the western side of the purification pit, based on Stavropoulos' descriptions and on Rhomaïos' (1929, 187 fig. 2) schematic plan



1 Iron sickles from the purification pit



2 The red-figure pelike with the cremated bones from tomb Γ



1 The location of the red-figure pelike inside the purification pit (the tomb of the pelike is indicated by the letter Γ)