MG1, exploration of the extensive architecture on the N, E and S will continue, along with the commencement of investigations on the southern summit of Megali Koprana (MG2) where well-preserved building remains are visible on the surface.

Organisations providing resources and logistic support were NSCP OPUS 20-2020/39/B/HS3/00820, Gerda Henkel Foundation (Germany), the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete, Kera Kardiotissas Monastery, alongside private donation of people from Kera, Krasi, Mochlos, and Tzermiado.

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Ancient Skopelos Survey (ASkoS) Project: Report from the first survey season

Anthi Batziou, Agata Ulanowska, Filip Franković, Peter Pavúk

Introduction

A significant number of fieldwork projects and theoretical studies conducted over the past few decades have greatly advanced our understanding of social, cultural, and political developments in the Northern Aegean during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. However, the Northern Sporades still remain one of the least explored areas in Bronze Age Aegean archaeology, despite their potential to deepen our knowledge of regional developments. The *Ancient Skopelos Survey* (ASkoS, 2024–2028; https://askos.archeologia.uw.edu.pl/) project was launched to address this notable gap, with a specific focus on clarifying the role of Skopelos Island within the broader context of socio-political, economic and cultural changes over the two millennia. ASkoS is a collaborative project (synergasia) between the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia under the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, with Dr Anthi Batziou as the project director, and the PAIA, represented by the project partner and co-director Prof. Agata Ulanowska from the UW. This collaboration also includes Dr Filip Franković, a co-director representing the University of Heidelberg and the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, and Prof. Peter Pavúk, a co-director from the Charles University in Prague, expanding the network established among these three universities within the 4EU+ Alliance and the Erasmus+ programme.

The first research season took place between September 21 and October 22 2024. Research team comprised 12 members from all partner institutions respectively: Dr A. Batziou, PhD candidate Dimitris Agnousiotis, Iacovos Georgiou, MA; Prof. A. Ulanowska, MA students Olga Chatys and Piotr Kuźlik, BA student Matylda Wawra; Dr F. Franković, BA student Leonidas Pearl; Prof. Dr P. Pavúk, PhD students Jan Bobik and Anna Peterková.

Aims of the *ASkoS* project

The Northern Sporades consist of the large islands of Skiathos, Skopelos, and Alonnisos, as well as numerous small and currently uninhabited islands. The geographical position of the archipelago, together with known sea currents and wind patterns, suggests its role as an intermediary connector between different parts of the Northern Aegean. Therefore, the relatively limited understanding of developments on the archipelago during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE is rather surprising. Interestingly, the distribution of prehistoric sites is better documented on the small islands than on the larger ones. Surveys conducted on the small islands during the 1970s and 1990s suggest that, in comparison to the preceding Neolithic period, the archipelago likely witnessed a significant decrease

in the number of sites during the Early Bronze Age (EBA), with evidence documented only on Psathoura and in the Cave of Cyclops on Gioura. The cave has also yielded the only evidence of Middle (MBA) and Late Bronze Age (LBA) habitation on the small islands. While Bronze Age (BA) sites are almost completely absent on the small islands, the aforementioned surveys identified dispersed habitation patterns in the periods preceding and following the BA (see Sampson 2000, 530–531; 2008, 123–126, 179–186).

Evidence of 2nd millennium BCE habitation has been identified on Skiathos, Skopelos, and Alonnisos (Platon 1949; Sampson 2000, 531). While Skiathos and Alonnisos show only sporadic signs of MBA habitation, Skopelos stands out with the discovery of an elaborate early LBA stone-built tomb at Staphylos (Platon 1949). Finds from the tomb, largely consisting of imports from the Argolid, Central Greece, and Thessaly, suggest that Skopelos was integrated into key regional interaction networks. The tomb's architecture and grave goods point to increasing social complexity and the use of funerary practices for status-building among local elites, indicating that Skopelos participated in broader socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations in the early LBA Aegean. In light of the quality and quantity of available BA data from the Northern Sporades, Skopelos has been selected as the starting point for the ASkoS project, which aims to enhance our understanding of the socio-political and economic role of the Northern Sporades during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE.

The main goals of our research project on Skopelos are as follows: 1) to examine diachronic changes in habitation patterns, with a specific focus on the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE; 2) to correlate the documented patterns with broader socio-political, economic, and cultural changes in the Aegean; 3) to correlate the documented patterns to local environmental changes; 4) to explore the role of Skopelos within intra- and interregional interaction networks of the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE; and 5) to identify a site with potential for future in-depth exploration through archaeological excavation. Although the BA is the primary focus of these research goals, the holistic and non-selective methodological approach of the project will contribute to improving current knowledge of archaeological remains from all prehistoric and historic periods attested on the island.

Methodology

The fundamental methodological approach of our research project is field survey. For the purposes of the ASkoS survey, Skopelos has been divided into three types of areas: 1) those with already attested archaeological significance; 2) areas with favourable topographic conditions, such as harbours and small plains; and 3) remote, hilly areas with low surface visibility. During the 2024 season, field surveys were conducted in areas classified as types 1 and 2, while surveys in areas of type 3 will be guided by the results of Airborne Laser Scanning (ALS), planned for the following seasons.

According to the applied methodology, we have subdivided the systematic field survey into three intensity levels: reconnaissance, extensive, and intensive, each following distinct principles. All three survey levels yield different types of data, allowing for a comparative approach and providing reliable insights into the cultural and chronological profiles of individual sites. Reconnaissance represents the least intensive and least systematised strategy, as it is conducted within large 1000 × 1000 m blocks. However, it enables a relatively small research team to cover a large area in a short period of time, making it an ideal strategy for the initial seasons. This approach supports the formulation of specific goals for future seasons by efficiently identifying new sites for subsequent extensive and intensive surveys. The extensive survey is conducted by teams of fieldwalkers within pre-set tracts (100 × 100 m). Fieldwalkers inspect the ground surface, count and collect artefacts, and document archaeological features (e.g., buildings, walls, etc.). Once the extensive field survey is completed, polygons covering the surface of the sites are defined based on the recorded high densities of finds (sherds and other artefacts). These polygons are then subjected to a high-resolution intensive survey within 10 × 10 m quadrants.

First results

In the 2024 season, research activities focused on reconnaissance along the coastal zone in the central part of the island. Our research incorporated seven archaeological sites, including two previously known and five newly discovered, spanning both prehistoric and historic periods. The previously known sites include Staphylos and Spitalia, while the newly identified sites are Amarantos, Trachili, Glisteri, Ayios Konstantinos, and an ancient quarry located south of

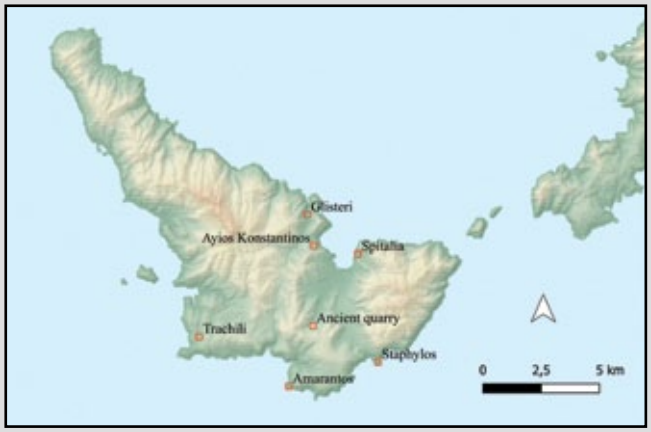

Fig. 1. Map of the Northern Sporades and Skopelos island with sites surveyed in 2024 season. Prepared by F. Franković

Skopelos Chora. The majority of these sites face significant threats due to their location in areas of high tourist activity, construction work, or ongoing modern quarrying (Fig. 1).

Special attention was dedicated to the already known site at Staphylos, located both on the peninsula and at Staphylos Beach. The site was covered by both reconnaissance and intensive field survey. Both methods resulted in a substantial collection of diagnostic pottery sherds and special finds, along with more than 25 substantially preserved architectural features, including building walls and terrace walls (Fig. 2). Unsurprisingly, Staphylos is also the site with the most prominent Bronze Age occupation. The majority of the documented remains appears to be prehistoric, dating to the MBA (and possibly even Early Bronze Age), early LBA, and Early Iron Age, with smaller quantities of finds from the later Classical, Hellenistic, and Byzantine periods. Preliminary analysis indicates distinct spatial patterns in the distribution of different chronological periods, with Middle Helladic sherds clustering in the northern and northwestern areas, while LBA and later prehistoric pottery appears more evenly distributed across the site (Fig. 3).

Evidence of LBA or early Iron Age habitation has also been identified at Ayios Konstantinos. Interestingly, this evidence suggests that in some cases, prehistoric remains may be buried beneath thick layers of accumulated soil, making their detection more challenging. As a result, while historic periods are well represented and often visible on the surface through architectural remains, prehistoric evidence on Skopelos is more difficult to detect through traditional survey methods. To address these challenges through, our project plans to incorporate targeted geoarchaeological research and the use of ALS in the future seasons.

The 2024 season also provided hands-on training for students in field survey methods and the processing of finds (Fig. 4). A significant effort was dedicated to setting up work facilities at the Asclepieion of Skopelos, including the installation of two ISOBOX units for office and storage space, generously provided by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia.

Additionally, the season featured strong community engagement, with activities organized by both the Skopelos Municipality and the project directors, such as visits to a local pottery workshop and the Shipbuilding Museum. The ASkoS project and its team were formally introduced to the Skopelos community on September 24 2024, with a public lecture at the Orfeas Cinema in Skopelos Chora.

Fig. 2. Fieldwalking on the Staphylos peninsula.
Photo by D. Agnousiotis

Funding and acknowledgements

The 2024 survey was co-funded by the Ephorate of Magnesia, the UW IDUB: Excellence Initiative–Research University grant no. 501-D115-20-7004, and the *Cooperatio* Programme by Charles University, research area Archaeology. Students' participation was supported by the *Archaeological Summer Field School on Skopelos* (ASFS, project ID: 612621, 2021/F2/10n 2024), funded by the 4EU+ Alliance and the Erasmus+ programme.

Fig. 3. Mycenaean goblet decorated with spirals. Photo by O. Chatys

Fig. 4. Participants of the ASkoS project, season 2024, photo by Dimitris Agnousiotis. From left to right: Leonidas Pearl, Jan Bobik, Peter Pavúk, Anna Peterková, Filip Franković, Olga, Chatys, Matylda Wawra, Agata Ulanowska, Anthi Batziou, and Piotr Kuźlik. Photo by D. Agnousiotis

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Report on the Polish-German-Greek excavations in the Roman Building in Thelpousa (western Arcadia, Peloponnese), season 2024

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Introduction

For many years, research on Roman period urbanism in the Peloponnese focused on large cities such as Corinth, Patras, or Sparta. However, recently there has been growing interest in the hinterlands of this region (Fouquet 2019). One of the areas where standing Roman-period structures can be found is mountainous Arcadia. A specific case is the city of Thelpousa, where a so-called Roman '*loutro*' (bath building) is located.

Thelpousa was an Arcadian polis located approximately 25 km east of ancient Olympia in the lower Ladon valley north of the modern village of Toumbitsi (Fig. 1). The origins of Thelpousa, situated on the left bank of the river, date back to the Archaic period. In the mid-2nd century AD, Pausanias (Paus. 8, 25, 3) described the "city built on a large hill" as largely "deserted", noting that its agora, formerly located