

THE TREASURIES OF THE SIPHNIANS: MYTH , WEALTH AND DECLINE THROUGH THE EXAM OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE¹

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ABSTRACT

During the Archaic period, Siphnos was one of the wealthiest communities in the Greek world. The island's gold and silver mines not only captured the imagination of Greek writers such as Herodotus and Pausanias, but also made possible the construction of one of the earliest religious structures made entirely out of marble: the Treasury of the Siphnians in Delphi. Although this magnificent monument has been a subject of continuous scholarly study and debate, little is known about the people who created it. The scant physical and literary evidence left by the Siphnians, as well as a discourse that has emphasized the island's insignificance after the Archaic period, has certainly hampered scholarly research. This paper therefore attempts a more defined picture of the Siphnians by reevaluating ancient texts that discuss the wealth and decline of Siphnos along with rare but important and thus far understudied archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence that has survived on the island.

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INTRODUCTION

Siphnos is a small island of only 75km of area², situated in the southwest part of the Cyclades and on the important Pireus-Kea-Kythnos-Siphnos maritime route (**Figure 1**). From it one can easily reach the principal islands at the center of the Cyclades such as Paros and Naxos. The island's rich mineral resources have been exploited from the Neolithic era through the Bronze Age and Archaic period,³ up until modern times. Silver and gold, which were extensively mined in the Archaic period, made Siphnos “the wealthiest of the islands,” as Herodotus (*Histories*, 3.57-58) claimed. The island's immense wealth enabled its inhabitants to engage in one of the most ambitious architectural projects of the Archaic period:⁴ the Treasury of the Siphnians in Delphi (**Figure 2**).⁵ The construction of this small, temple-like structure – built entirely of Parian marble and lavishly decorated with narrative sculpture – not only demanded materials and techniques of the highest caliber, but also the most gifted sculptors of the era. Yet though the magnificence and uniqueness of the Treasury has attracted the attention of numerous scholars, remarkably little is known about the people who erected it.⁶ This lack of knowledge about the Siphnians cannot be attributed solely to negligence on the part of scholars, but also to the rarity of literary sources and archaeological remains on the island.⁷ Despite these obstacles, it is possible to get a more defined picture of the Siphnians beyond their Treasury by reassessing understudied literary and archaeological sources. As will be shown in my paper, once they are relocated in a broader context, “the treasures of Siphnians” – that is, artifacts

² Mazarakis-Ainian, 2006.

³ The silver and gold mines on Siphnos in the Archaic period have been extensively studied by scholars, and have been the subject of considerable fieldwork. For a general overview of the topic, see Wagner 2000 and Phillipson and Phillipson, 2000.

⁴ The Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi is a key monument from the late Archaic era and one of the first buildings to be made entirely of marble and richly decorated by sculptors from the most prestigious art centers of the period. For a recent bibliography on this vast subject, see Brinkmann 1994; Sheedy, 2000; Neer, 2001; Viviers, 2002; Mari, 2005; Papadoperaki, 2005; D'Acunto, 2013; Palmisciano, 2013.

⁵ Sheedy, 2000.

⁶ Although there is still no study covering the various aspects of Siphnian society and art, K. A. Sheedy has written innumerable articles on the coins and statues found on the island. His invaluable and inspiring work is extensively used here. See Sheedy 2000; Sheedy 1988; Sheedy 1992; Sheedy 2006-07, Sheedy 2006a, Sheedy 2006b. In addition several scholars took systematic notes on the artifacts scattered on the island: Pollak 1896; Gerousi 2000; Kalogirou 2000; Karagianni 2000; Ditsa 2005; Zafeiropoulou 2000; Zafeiropoulou 2009. More recently Bonnin 2013 and Van Wees 2013, 17-38, have done much to enhance understanding of the island's history.

⁷ Brock and Mackworth 1949.

disseminated across Siphnos or lying long forgotten in museums – may help us to redefine the culture and history of the island in a way that goes beyond old legends and the celebrated monument in Delphi.

In order to do so, I will take a fresh look at two issues that can be investigated with the material currently available. In the first half, I will reevaluate the discourse on Siphnian wealth during the Archaic period, which, according to ancient sources, was followed by decadence and indigence. Showing how the wealth from the Archaic period is attested in the island's archaeological remains, which thus reconfirm the literary sources, I will argue that the subsequent era of deterioration needs to be reconsidered. Indeed, though several classical authors note the decline of Siphnos, its material remains point to a different direction. In the second half of my paper, on the other hand, I present the cults practiced on Siphnos. Here my intention is not only to list the gods worshiped on the island, but also to explore the social and cultural implications of certain of the cults offered them, particularly in the Roman era, a period traditionally deemed decadent. Obviously the material covered by this article cannot provide a complete picture of Siphnian culture and society but only illuminate certain aspects of them. The materials and texts explored here also aim to point out the need for further studies on the largely unexplored artifacts of Siphnos.

1-REEVALUATING A TALE OF WEALTH AND DECLINE: THE SIPHNIANS AFTER THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

In antiquity, Siphnos became famous not only for the aforementioned Treasury in Delphi, but also for its immense wealth. As Herodotus and Pausanias were the two authors who passed down most of what we know about the history of Siphnian prosperity and decadence, it is worth reconsidering their texts. I thus begin my discussion with a passage from Herodotus (*Histories*, 3.57-58), in which the ancient historian notes that Siphnos was once the richest of the islands, and that thanks to its resources was able not only to erect the Treasury in Delphi but also build a prytaneion and an agora of Parian marble:

οἱ δ' ἐπὶ τὸν Πολυκράτεια στρατευσάμενοι Σαμίων, ἐπεὶ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοὺς ἀπολιπεῖν ἔμελλον, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀπέπλεον ἐς Σίφνον, χρημάτων γὰρ ἐδέοντο, τὰ δὲ τῶν Σιφνίων πρήγματα ἤκμαζε τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον, καὶ νησιωτῶν μάλιστα ἐπλούτεον, ἅτε ἐόντων αὐτοῖσι ἐν τῇ νήσῳ χρυσέων καὶ ἀργυρέων μετάλλων, οὕτω ὥστε ἀπὸ τῆς δεκάτης τῶν γινομένων αὐτόθεν χρημάτων θησαυρὸς ἐν Δελφοῖσι ἀνάκειται ὅμοια τοῖσι πλουσιωτάτοισι: αὐτοὶ δὲ τὰ γινόμενα τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ ἐκάστῳ χρήματα διενέμοντο. ὅτε ὧν ἐποιεῦντο τὸν θησαυρὸν, ἐχρέωντο τῷ χρηστηρίῳ εἰ αὐτοῖσι τὰ παρεόντα ἀγαθὰ οἶά τε ἐστὶ

πολλὸν χρόνον παραμένειν: ἡ δὲ Πυθίη ἔχρησέ σφι τάδε. “ἀλλ’ ὅταν ἐν Σίφνῳ πρυτανήια λευκὰ γένηται λευκοφρῦς τ’ ἀγορή, τότε δὴ δεῖ φράδμονος ἀνδρός φράσσασθαι ξύλινόν τε λόχον κήρυκά τ’ ἐρυθρόν.” τοῖσι δὲ Σιφνίοισι ἦν τότε ἡ ἀγορὴ καὶ τὸ πρυτανήιον Παρίῳ* λίθῳ ἡσκημένα.

*When the Lacedaemonians were about to abandon them, the Samians who had brought an army against Polycrates sailed away too, and went to Siphnus; for they were in need of money; and the Siphnians were at this time very prosperous and the richest of the islanders, because of the gold and silver mines on the island. They were so wealthy that the treasure dedicated by them at Delphi, which is as rich as any there, was made from a tenth of their income; and they divided among themselves each year's income. Now when they were putting together the treasure they inquired of the oracle if their present prosperity was likely to last long; whereupon the priestess gave them this answer: “When the prytaneum on Siphnus becomes white And white-browed the market, then indeed a shrewd man is wanted Beware a wooden force and a red herald.” At this time the market-place and town-hall of Siphnus were adorned with Parian marble (Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.57. Translation A. D. Godley)*

τοῦτον τὸν χρησμόν οὐκ οἷοί τε ἦσαν γνῶναι οὔτε τότε εὐθὺς οὔτε τῶν Σαμίων ἀπιγμένων. ἐπεῖτε γὰρ τάχιστα πρὸς τὴν Σίφνον προσίσχον οἱ Σάμιοι, ἔπεμπον τῶν νεῶν μίαν πρέσβευς ἄγουσαν ἐς τὴν πόλιν. τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν ἅπασαι αἱ νέες ἦσαν μιληλιφέες, καὶ ἦν τοῦτο τὸ ἡ Πυθίη προηγόρευε τοῖσι Σιφνίοισι, φυλάσασθαι τὸν ξύλινον λόχον κελεύουσα καὶ κήρυκα ἐρυθρόν. ἀπικόμενοι ὧν οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐδέοντο τῶν Σιφνίων δέκα τάλαντά σφι χρῆσαι: οὐ φασκόνταν δὲ χρήσειν τῶν Σιφνίων αὐτοῖσι, οἱ Σάμιοι τοὺς χώρους αὐτῶν ἐπόρθεον. πυθόμενοι δὲ εὐθὺς ἦκον οἱ Σίφνιοι βοηθέοντες καὶ συμβαλόντες αὐτοῖσι ἐσώθησαν, καὶ αὐτῶν πολλοὶ ἀπεκλήισθησαν τοῦ ἄστεος ὑπὸ τῶν Σαμίων, καὶ αὐτοὺς μετὰ ταῦτα ἑκατὸν τάλαντα ἐπρηξαν.

They could not understand this oracle either when it was spoken or at the time of the Samians' coming. As soon as the Samians put in at Siphnos, they sent ambassadors to the town in one of their ships; now in ancient times all ships were painted with vermilion;¹ and this was what was meant by the warning given by the priestess to the Siphnians, to beware a wooden force and a red herald. The messengers, then, demanded from the Siphnians a loan of ten talents; when the Siphnians refused them, the Samians set about ravaging their lands. Hearing this the Siphnians came out at once to drive them off, but they were defeated in battle, and many of them were cut off from their town by the Samians; who presently exacted from them a hundred talents. (Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.58. Translation A. D. Godley)

So far no traces of the marble prytaneion or agora mentioned by Herodotus have been found, but archaeological research on the island has discovered some evidence of the Siphnians' display of wealth through the use of high quality materials and artisans. Indeed, plenty of fine architectural structures and artifacts more or less contemporaneous with the construction of the Treasury at Delphi can still be found on Siphnos. At Kastro (**Figure 3 and Figure 4**), the site of the island's ancient capital, for example, two votive

deposits with objects ranging from 700 to 550 BC, and clearly belonging to a temple have been discovered (**Figure 5**). The artifacts (which include several jewelry items, seals in ivory (**Figure 6**) and some rare and unique fine clay statues seem to have been laid down by the late sixth century, when the acropolis was expanded. By that point in time, an old temple built of perishable materials may have already been replaced by a marble structure, as suggested by marble chips in the strata.⁸ J. K. Brock claimed that the votive deposits clearly indicate that by the seventh century BC a temple had stood here, perhaps higher up the rocky slope on the hill's summit, a spot today occupied by the church of Panagia Eleousa.⁹

Other archaeological remains likewise demonstrate the Siphnians' commitment to embellishing their city in the Archaic era. An early sixth-century BC lion head may serve as testimony of the Siphnians' desire to display their wealth several decades prior to the construction of the Treasury (**Figure 7**).¹⁰ Although all that is left of the head is the area between the forehead and the nose, its dimensions make it possible to infer that the entire statue had been of considerable size. As K. A. Sheedy noted, this piece made of porous stone and long neglected in the Siphnos Archaeological Museum, was an exotic item. It seems to have been inspired by Assyrian lions and differs from those usually found on the Cyclades, such as the Naxian lions on the Delian terrace (**Figure 8**). As Sheedy claimed, this work was probably imported to Siphnos or carved on the island by a foreign sculptor.¹¹

Further evidence of Siphnian flamboyance can be seen in a sphinx head, probably of Parian marble, found integrated into a wall of a house in Kastro (**Figure 9**). Sheedy, the last to have studied the piece in detail, dated it to 550 BC and concluded that it belonged to a temple's acroterion.¹² If he was correct, then we may infer the existence of yet another building from the late Archaic period. But the appearance of a sphinx on an acroterion is also significant for being unusual. Indeed, though sphinxes crowning votive

⁸ Brock and Mackworth 1949, 5. The marble chips may also come from the blocks that were prepared for constructing the marble wall.

⁹ The remains of the ancient acropolis of Siphnos, located on the summit of the hill of Kastro, were excavated before the Second World War by an English team lead by J. Brock. As a medieval town and its modern successor were built over the ancient site of Kastro, the archaeological team did not succeed in finding further evidence of Siphnos.

ian wealth. See Brock and Mackworth 1949.

¹⁰ Sheedy 1992.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Sheedy 1988 proposed a date of 550 BC based on the modeling of the head and the design of the ears and suggested that the head was that of a sphinx due to the twist in its neck and the dowel attached to the head.

columns are well attested on the Cyclades (e.g. the Sphinx of the Naxians at Delphi and the colossal sphinx from Delos, probably a Parian work) (**Figure 10**), their inclusion on acroteria has thus far been documented only on the Treasury of the Siphnians in Delphi and on the Delion at Paros (490-480 BC) (**Figure 11**).¹³

The investigation of the few surviving artifacts from Siphnos makes it clear that by the time the Treasury in Delphi had been erected, the Siphnians were already flaunting their wealth in secular and religious monuments on their island. Thus the words of Herodotus (*Histories*, 3.57-58) on Siphnian ostentation are confirmed by archaeology. According to him, however, this prosperity was destined to come to an end as the oracle of Delphi predicted a “*wooden trap, a red herald.*” The evil that struck the Siphnians turned out to be Samian pirates, who captured the island and requested 100 talents. The fascinating tale retold by Herodotus, which unfortunately cannot be discussed in detail here, illustrates how *hubris* (here represented by the use of Parian marble to cover secular monuments) was followed by a reversal of fortune. Although Herodotus does not speak of subsequent poverty on the island it is not difficult to infer from his text that Siphnos entered a period of decline after the Samian request, the misinterpretation of an oracle always brings disaster upon those who fail to understand it.¹⁴

The gold and wealth of the Siphnians are noted also by Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 10.11.2), who relates how the Siphnians stopped paying the tribute imposed on them by Pythian Apollo due to their greed (which too can be considered a sort of *hubris*) and were then punished by the God, who flooded their mines.¹⁵ This was the cataclysm, Pausanias claims, that brought an end to their prosperity and initiated their downward spiral:

ταῦτα ἔσθηκε παρὰ τὸν Σικυωνίων θησαυρόν· ἐποι- ἴθη δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ Σιφνίων ἐπὶ αἰτία τοιᾶδε θησαυρός. Σιφνίοις ἡ νῆσος χρυσοῦ μέταλλα ἦνεγκε, καὶ αὐτοὺς τῶν προσιόντων ἐκέλευσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀποφέρειν δεκάτην ἐς Δελφοῦς· οἱ δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν ᾠκοδομήσαντο καὶ ἀπέφερον τὴν δεκάτην. ὡς δὲ ὑπὸ ἀπληστίας ἐξέλιπον τὴν φορὰν, ἐπικλύσασα ἡ θάλασσα ἀφανῆ τὰ μέταλλά σφισιν ἐποίησεν.

These stand by the treasury of the Sicyonians. The Siphnians too made a treasury, the reason being as follows. Their island contained gold mines, and the god ordered them to pay a tithe of the revenues to Delphi. So they built the treasury, and continued to pay the tithe until greed made them omit the tribute, when the

¹³ Sphinxes on funerary monuments are well attested but are a distinctly Attic feature. For sphinxes on votive columns in the Cyclades, see Sheedy 1988.

¹⁴ Phillipson and Phillipson 2000; Di Branco 2000.

¹⁵ Di Branco 2000.

sea flooded their mines and hid them from sight. (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10.11.2. English Translation by W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod).

Yet though the decline and poverty of the Siphnians can be inferred from Herodotus and Pausanias, neither author refers directly to these qualities. Instead they represent the Siphnians in a negative light because they exhibit spiritual traits (greed and excess) that are surely censurable. The list of authors deprecating the Siphnians includes Antipatros from Thessaloniki (Antipater of Thessalonica, *Greek Anthology*, 9. 421) one of whose epigrams refers to the sad destiny of the Cyclades, once magnificent but now desolate. The lexicon of Suda also mentions the poverty of Siphnos (cf. Suda Σίφνιοι).

The *topos* of decline leading the Siphnians into poverty continues throughout antiquity, even in the Roman period, when it reappears in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7. 465 . It is precisely because of the theme's persistence in ancient sources that scholars have assumed the decline of Siphnos after the Archaic period.¹⁶ Yet this kind of approach towards the decline of this or any other island needs to be taken with extreme caution.¹⁷ Indeed, as C. Constantakopoulou has persuasively demonstrated, in order to control the Aegean Islands in the fifth century, Athenians not only took over Delos, but justified their ambition through ideological means by establishing Athens as the mother-city of Ionia and rewriting the mythical past¹⁸ by compiling a list of old thalassocracies that resembled the Athenian maritime empire, onto which they projected mythical and old maritime powers (including Minos), and by made insularity synonymous with subjugation, weakness, poverty, and insignificance.¹⁹ Thus, as Constantakopoulou argues, any insistence on the poverty of a Cycladic island, Siphnos included, should be understood within this ideological context for assertions about decadence, isolation and moral flaws rarely correspond to the reality.²⁰ Indeed in the case of Siphnos, any closer examination of its archaeological remains is enough to abandon the belief that it succumbed to poverty and decay after the Archaic period.

¹⁶ On this issue, see Brun 2000.

¹⁷ For authors who associated the decline of Siphnos with the flooding of the mines in the late Archaic period, see Ashton 1991, 20, who dates this decline to between the death of Herodotus (ca. 420 BC), who did not refer to the Siphnians' decline, and 385 BC, when it is explicitly mentioned by Aristophanes in fragment 912.

¹⁸ On the poverty of Siphnos see Brun 2005. Constantakopoulou 2010, 63-65. On relations between Athens and Siphnos, see Rutishauser 2005 and Bonnin 2013.

¹⁹ Constantakopoulou 2010, 90-136.

²⁰ Constantakopoulou 2010, 135, refers to Thasos, Paros and Naxos as islands whose wealth easily refuted the rhetorical discourse promoted by Athens on the poverty and insignificance of the islands.

The first proof of Siphnians prosperity after the Archaic period lies in mines. Indeed, although some Siphnians mines were flooded when sea levels rose late in the Archaic period, geological research shows that quite a number of them were located inland rather than along the coast and were thus not affected by the rising waters.²¹

The strongest evidence of the Siphnians wealth after the Archaic period, however, consists of at least seventy round towers constructed of local marble at several points on the island (**Figures 12-13-14-15**).²² Although the precise function of these towers – either on Siphnos or elsewhere in Greece – is still debatable, research indicates that they are certainly to be associated with wealth.

In order to understand this association, we must first make a brief digression into the current debate over the towers' function. Massive and particularly numerous in the Cycladic islands, these towers were erected from the Classical to the Hellenistic eras. Towards the end of the Hellenistic period, they came to be used less and less and finally not at all. None were erected in the Roman era.²³

The massiveness of the towers as well as the fact that some were attached to circuit walls initially led scholars to assume that they had served a defensive function.²⁴ Huge protective structures located inland were, in fact, justified by the turbulence of the times (fifth to third centuries BC) in which the towers went up. Indeed, their construction coincides with several wars that may have led to the invasion of the countryside: the Peloponnesian War, wars with Persia or Macedon, and the continuous wars among the various Greek states.²⁵

Thus towers situated on peaks or along the coast were most likely used for defense (or perhaps as lighthouses). Yet the presence of several of them beneath peaks and in relatively isolated areas speaks against their protective function against external attacks. At Siphnos, the towers on peaks were evidently used for observation, while those along the coast may have been used for both protection and surveillance. Nonetheless most of the towers on the island are located inland and the indivisibility between the southeast and

²¹ Phillipson and Phillipson, 2000.

²² Ashton 1991; Birkett-Smith 2005; Young 1956; Morris and Papadopoulos 2005. Here I want to observe that the map with the towers of Siphnos elaborated by Ashton 1991,35-figure 9 on this paper- is not complete. Indeed since Ashton elaborated his maps of the towers of Siphnos many other examples were discovered and so far no Archaeologist have updated the map.

²³ In the Cyclades, towers are found in Amorgos, Andros, Despotiko, Kea, Naxos, Siphnos and Tenos; on the mainland, in Attica, Megara, and Argolid; in the northern Aegean, in Thasos and Lesbos; and on the Ionian islands, on Leucas. A comprehensive corpus of the towers remains to be compiled, however. See Morris and Papadopoulos 2005.

²⁴ Ross 1845, 120, 132-3; Droop 1923; Young 1956, 132.

²⁵ See Munn 1983, 1985; Foxhall 1993; and Hanson 1998 the following literature for on view on the insecurity on of the period. Munn 1983, 1985; Foxhall 1993; Hanson 1998.

south-west groupings is very tenuous, which indicates that the towers were not necessarily used for communication in case of attack.²⁶

The distribution pattern of the towers on Siphnos repeats itself in several other areas of Greece (**Figure 12**), where those located inland do not appear to have been built for protective purposes. Faced with this puzzle, scholars such as J. H. Young have proposed that the inland towers were associated with Greek farms and were used for security in the private as opposed to public sphere.²⁷ One interesting example of towers with such a function is the example from the Cycladic island in Amorgos (**Figure 16**).²⁸ Although this is an appealing theory, it does not explain the large number of towers present in cities and the vicinity of quarries or mines.²⁹ As L. Ross observed long ago, most of the towers on Siphnos are located either near active mines or in areas that contain signs of earlier mining activity. This has led some scholars to abandon the figure of the peasant citizen or modest hoplite warrior-farmer as promoted by comedy, pastoral poetry or philosophy, and to see the Greek farm in a new light according to which the towers were associated with extractive activities (mining and quarrying) or the intense cultivation of produce meant to generate a surplus (wines and olives).³⁰ This profitable exploration of the resources would be made through the use of non free labor-intensive.³¹ Literary and epigraphic sources show that the towers were related to slave labor and were used to prevent slaves from escaping or despoiling natural resources.³² Based on analyses of epigraphic evidence, these new interpretations of the Greek farm also reveal that towers were not inhabited by their owners, but instead were leased in most cases to metics by wealthy landlords.³³

In conclusion, the high incidence of towers on Siphnos suggests that mineral resources – possibly iron – were intensely explored after the Archaic period and that it is thus highly unlikely that the island entered a deep decline and became impoverished as implied by classical literature. It is also conceivable that wine or other agricultural surplus was explored on Siphnos. As there are many terraces on the island today it is possible that the terrain was used in a similar way in antiquity.

²⁶ On the intervisibility among the towers of Siphnos, see Ashton 1991.

²⁷ Young 1956.

²⁸ Korres 2005.

²⁹ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005.

³⁰ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005.

³¹ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005 offer a review of the scholarship on ancient farms and their use of towers. See also Osborne, 1986.

³² On the escape of slaves, see Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, 181

³³ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005.

CULTS ON SIPHNOS

The exam of cultic practices is another means by which one can learn more about the Siphnians.³⁴ Fragments of columns and various structures – simply lying on the ground or incorporated into local architecture – serve as testimony of cultic buildings (**Figure 17**). A fuller examination of these pieces based on the molds prepared for the study of Paros in Munich under the supervision of G. Grueben and A. Onhesorg remains to be done.³⁵

The Siphnian cult about which the most is known from materials currently available is that of Artemis. It is attested by archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence. The toponym Artemonas, granted to a modern village on the island, may indicate that the cult of the goddess was once celebrated there.³⁶ A recent excavation of the acropolis of Aghios Andreas conducted by C. Televantou has identified a cult of Artemis (**Figures 3 and 18**). However, because the excavation is still in progress and only some of its papers have thus far been published, it is difficult to speculate about other cults practiced at the site.³⁷

As of now, the best testimonies of the cult of Artemis on Siphnos are the materials retrieved from the excavations on the Kastro of Siphnos. Here were found traces of an Archaic temple and two votives deposits that clearly belonged to a temple with objects ranging in date from 700-500 BC.³⁸ Excavated by J. K. Brock, the two deposits held similar objects (seventh-century pottery, ivory, bronze). The numerous fibulae, jewelry items, and seals discovered in them resemble the votives encountered at Despotiko and Kythnos and are presumed to be refer to a cult of Artemis.³⁹

The most significant objects are two seventh-century BC clay statues that may represent Artemis (**Figure 19 and Figure 20**). Although only parts of

³⁴ Gorrini 2005 wrote important notes on the Pantheon of Siphnos.

³⁵ Besides a full catalogue of the pieces, stylistic studies are needed to determine whether they belong to the island or were brought there from other places as construction material. According to A. Ohnesorg, the larger ones lying around must belong to the place since transporting them would have been extremely difficult. The publications on the reconstruction of the buildings on Paros cover over twenty years of research and include far too many to cite here, so I limit myself to two of the most important: Grueben 1982 and 1993.

³⁶ As already noted, several sites on Siphnos still need to be properly excavated. Future investigations in the area of Artemonas may reveal whether or not Artemis was worshiped there.

³⁷ Televantou 2000; Televantou 2005; Televantou 2008; Televantou 2009; Televantou 2010; Televantou 2013; Some of the artifacts excavated on Aghios Andreas are on display at the Archaeological Museum located at the site. During a study trip in 2012 I had the opportunity to see several objects dating to the historical period.

³⁸ Brock and Mackworth 1949.

³⁹ For a general overview of the cult of Artemis on the Cyclades, see Angliker (forthcoming).

their lower bodies and a few fragments of their upper bodies are preserved, it is clear from their bell shape that they were made on a wheel. Whether these statuettes were votives or the principal cult statues of the temple (or both) is impossible to ascertain, but their similarity to one found at Despotiko (**Figure 21**) (which may also have served as a cult statue of Artemis) may indicate a similar function. Regardless of their purpose, they are clearly objects of considerable prestige, as is evident from the quality of the painting on the ceramic, the elongation of the figures' bodies, and the use of rare vase techniques.⁴⁰

The decoration also draws attention to their unique silhouette style. According to J. K. Brock, it was not executed with a typical Naxian vase-painting technique; most likely the Naxian artisan was inspired by textiles with animal panels.⁴¹ The body of one clay statue is preserved only from the waist down, which area is broken down into three main vertical zones: one decorated with scalloped meanders; one adorned with double spirals with floral patterns at the points of the joints, and the third filled with three squares of alternating parathetic griffins and winged horses (**Figure 22**). Several fragments of the upper torso of the second clay statue are preserved, as is most of the area below the waist. Here the decoration appears in horizontal bands, of which two – each depicting winged horses and various geometrical patterns – are still distinguishable.⁴²

Although no indisputable evidence exists for determining the identity of these two clay-statues, the decoration of their garments sheds some light on this problem. As Brock noted, the animals and sphinx designs on the skirt of one of the Siphnian statuettes could be linked to Artemis, but as orientalizing creatures of this sort appear in stock decorative patterns on vases and the vestments of goddesses, their presence here is not incontestable proof of a representation of Artemis.⁴³

In a recent article, N. Kourou resumed the debate over the meaning of the animals decorating these Siphnian statuettes and their possible association with an early form of the cult of Artemis as Potnia.⁴⁴ Based on his belief that the geometric motifs were not mere decorative patterns embellishing the pottery, Kourou investigated their symbolism through a comparative analysis of several Archaic statues, particularly clay ones.⁴⁵ She discovered that in the Geometric period, when iconographic motifs such as animals and sphinxes appeared in heraldic positions on the dresses of female figures, they were generally, but not

⁴⁰ Brock and Mackworth 1949, 20.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Kourou 2000; Kourou 2005.

⁴³ Brock and Mackworth 1949, 20.

⁴⁴ Kourou 2005.

⁴⁵ Kourou 2005.

exclusively, associated with Potnia Theron, who could be manifested as either Artemis or Athena. Representations of Potnia Theron as Artemis or Athena, however, could take many distinctive forms. Indeed by the 7th century BC, Athena, even when clearly depicted as Palas (with helmet, shield and spear), never wears a garment decorated with a sphinx or any other animal. Kourou thus concluded that images of animals were reserved for the garments worn by Artemis, a phenomenon testified by the clay statuettes found at Artemisia (which for sure can be associated with Artemis), whose dresses are decorated with animals in heraldic positions. Amongst the examples she uses to make her argument is a clay statuette from Thasos, a colony of Paros, which was certainly deeply influenced by the art of the Cyclades.⁴⁶

In short, the cult of Artemis on Siphnos is implied by the iconography of the two singular clay statues found in the votive deposit discussed here, and which reveal ornamental patterns similar to those encountered at other sanctuaries of Artemis in the Cyclades.

In terms of the Classical period, evidence of the cult of Artemis exists only in olbos minted in around 460-455 BC.⁴⁷ On their obverse, these coins exhibit a head of a woman wearing earrings and her long hair rolled up around a band, which, according to numismatists can be interpreted as that of Artemis.

Evidence of the cult of Artemis in the Hellenistic period appears in a passage by Hesychios, who refers to the cult of Artemis *ekbateria* in one of his glosses: Ἐκβατηρία· Ἄρτεμις ἐν Σίφνῳ. The epithet '*ekbateria*,' literally "for disembarking," certainly refers to a topographical area of the island, namely, the harbor. Indeed, gods/goddess assigned to this epithet, which usually refers to the acts of embarkation and disembarkation, are deemed to protect sailors and for this reason are granted a cult that often includes sacrifices and various offerings. *Ekbateria* can also refer to the dismemberment of a deity in places along the coast and the subsequent establishment of their cult as *theoi soterioi* for sailors. The presence of a deity who watches over the activities of a harbor can certainly be understood as vital for an island, where many things are dependent on and linked to navigation. The aforementioned towers indicate that intense economical activity was taking place on Siphnos. In such a context the veneration of a divine protector of sailors and people doing business in a harbor makes much sense.

Lastly, scant but significant evidence of the cult of Artemis on Siphnos also exists for the Roman era in the form of a marble stele of unknown provenance with a relief depicting Artemis–Ephesia (**Figure 23**). The relief, which is at

⁴⁶ Kourou 2005. For the coroplastic of Thasos see Weill 1995; Huysecom-Haxhi, 2009.

⁴⁷ Sheedy 2006, 51.

the Siphnos Archaeological Museum is probably the same one described by L. Pollak, who visited the island in 1896.⁴⁸ Only partly preserved (height of 0.31 m and width 0.34m), the stele depicts a female figure whose head and lower body are missing. She is clearly represented in a frontal position and wears a heavy, garment with sleeves that are decorated with horizontal fields filled with geometric patterns that are difficult to distinguish due to the work's worn condition. The figure's arms are stretched out to the side while its forearms are slightly bent. The palm of the right hand is open, and above the right forearm one can see a figure of a crab. The left wrist rests on a column with two capitals atop of which is a bird represented in profile. The figure's left hand is missing. Depicted above its left forearm is a lion moving from behind the woman towards the exterior. The figure also wears a thick round necklace that resembles a garland and hangs down to her chest. Below this necklace, are three successive arched lines that cover the front of the figure to the waist. Placed along each of these lines are objects in the "form of eggs." As F. Zafeiropoulou pointed out, several features of this female figure allow us to identify her as Artemis-Ephesia: the egg-shaped objects, the heavy garment, the frontal pose with outstretched arms and open palms, the sharp tapering of the body towards the bottom (as in a small column), columns supporting the outstretched arms, the figure of the lion above the arm, and the heavy necklace around the neck that appears to be a garland of flowers (a very common offering to the image of Artemis).⁴⁹ As Zafeiropoulou noted, in addition to having all these elements in common with typical representations of Artemis Ephesia, the relief from Siphnos has one highly unusual feature: the bottom of the figure's body ends in a herm. Also unique is the rapacious bird on the column, as well as the triple row of semi-circular garlands as typical figures of Artemis Ephesia display three successive tiers of "breasts."⁵⁰ The singularities of this Artemis Ephesia boosts our understanding of the cult of this goddess on Siphnos since, as Zafeiropoulos has pointed out, they show that the cult of Artemis Ephesia was assimilated here with that of a local Siphnian deity.⁵¹ The unusual features of the relief reveal that the Siphnians wished to preserve specific characteristics of a goddess worshiped on the island in the figure of Artemis Ephesia.

Given the scant vestiges of the cults practiced on Siphnos in the Roman period, determining which goddess was assimilated with Artemis Ephesia is

⁴⁸ The description and measurements of a relief fixed in a lime lintel of an abandoned house in Exampela found by L. Pollak match the piece deposited at the Siphnos Archaeological Museum; Zafeiropoulou 2005; Pollak 1896.

⁴⁹ Zafeiropoulou 2005.

⁵⁰ Zafeiropoulou 2005.

⁵¹ Zafeiropoulou 2005.

an impossible task. Yet the very presence of Artemis Ephesia on the island is significant and reveals much about the social and historical conditions on Siphnos. Scholars have spent over forty years and a great deal of energy interpreting and contextualizing statues of Artemis Ephesia (both those that served as central images and their numerous copies). They have devoted particular attention to the iconography of the chest area adornment and are still debating its meaning and origins. Although these issues cannot be fully addressed here, it is worth noting two highly insightful papers, one by F. E. Brenk, the other by L. R. Lidonnici, which argue that the image of Artemis Ephesia, which combines eastern and western features, would have appealed to both the Greeks and Anatolians and would have thus been suitable for Roman Ephesus, a cosmopolitan city that was no longer a small Hellenic urban cluster in a foreign land. Within this context, Artemis Ephesia, the city's goddess-protector, was transformed into a more universal divinity offering general protection and nurturing.⁵²

Siphnians trading in Roman Ephesus, would have had no problem adopting and bringing home the Ephesian Artemis, a goddess who by this point in time had assumed universal traits. Thus the presence of Ephesia Artemis on Siphnos points to the multicultural character that pervaded Siphnian society by the Roman period. Indeed, many other artifacts, most of them understudied, testify to the exuberant nature of Siphnos in this later era. Fine Roman sarcophagi spread throughout the island, marble funerary urns, and rich contents at Siphnian tombs likewise imply a period of relatively prosperity (**Figure 24**).⁵³ The presence of such wealth may provoke some astonishment if we recall that the decline of the Cyclades is also mentioned by Roman authors. The aforementioned literary *topos* initiated by the Athenian empire was certainly related to this phenomenon. Yet the Roman period is one of the least studied in the Cyclades, even in terms of the *topos* in question. Fortunately some recent isolated studies have begun to pave the ground for a better understanding of the subject.⁵⁴ In addition to individual papers that shed light on this period, new approaches are beginning to question the notion of hegemony on the Cyclades, including that of the Romans, and reveal that their presence on the islands could not have coincided with a period of decline.⁵⁵

⁵² Lidonnici 1992 and Brenk 1998.

⁵³ Brock and Mackworth 1949.

⁵⁴ On Roman Cyclades see E. Le Quéré, 2015.

⁵⁵ Bonnin and Quéré 2014 includes many important articles on topics related to the problem of hegemony on the Cyclades.

CONCLUSION

The island of Siphnos created one of the most important structures of the Archaic period: the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi. Despite the undeniable importance of Siphnians in Greek history and art little is known about this people. This paper has brought together some long neglected material in Siphnos that can reveal a bit more about the society and religion of its inhabitants. It has also shown that in order for research on the Cyclades to progress, scholars need to reread ancient sources by inserting them in the rhetorical context within which they were created. Rather than offer a final word on the Siphnians, I hope that I have shown the urgent importance of engaging in deeper studies on Siphnos, be they of the island's literary, artistic or historical character.

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Figure 1. Map of the Cyclades by T. Ross



Figure 2. Detail of the Sculpted Decoration of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi. After A. Mazarakis-Ainian, 2006. "Siphnos." In *Archaeology Aegean Islands*, edited by A. G. Vlachopoulos, 252, figure 362. Athens: Melissa.



Figure 3. Map of Siphnos Showing the Main Archaeological Sites on the Island. After A. Mazarakis-Ainian, 2006. "Siphnos." In *Archaeology Aegean Islands*, edited by A. G. Vlachopoulos, 252. Athens: Melissa.



Figure 4. Siphnos View of the Kastro. The Modern Settlement Occupies the Site of the Ancient City. Photo Erica Angliker.

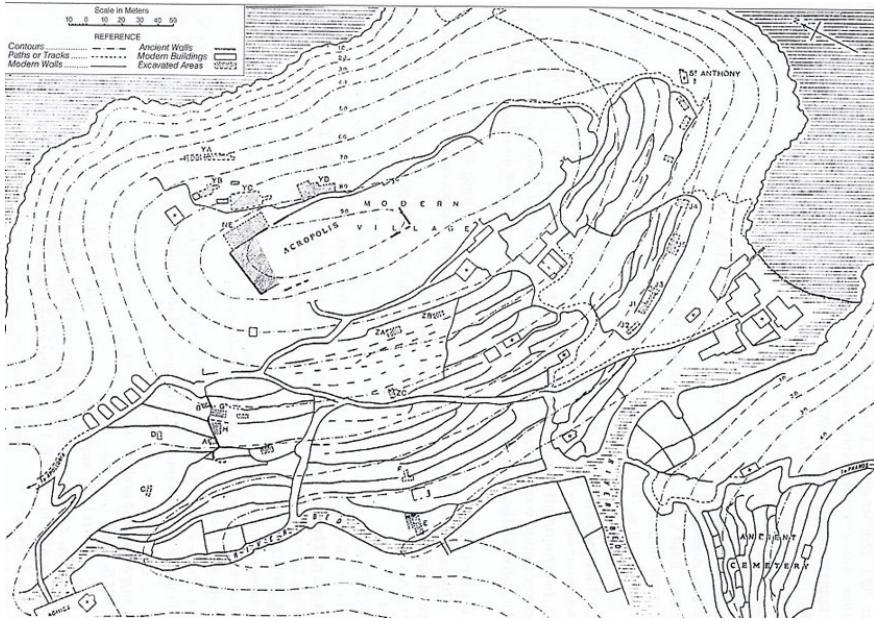


Figure 5. Plan of the Acropolis of Siphnos. After J. K. Brock and Y. G. Mackworth. 1949. "Excavations in Siphnos." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 44, Plate 1.



Figure 6. Ivory Seals and Pendants from the Votive Deposit of the Acropolis of Siphnos. After J. K. Brock and Y. G. Mackworth. 1949. "Excavations in Siphnos." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 44, Plate 10.



Figure 7. Head of a Lion, Siphnos, Archaeological Museum inv. 46. After K. A. Sheedy, 1992. "Some Observations on Three Examples of Archaic Sculpture Found on Siphnos. *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 107:Plate 21.1.



Figure 8. Terrace of Lions in Delos, ca. 600BC. Photo Erica Angliker.



Figure 9. Head of a Sphinx, Siphnos, Archaeological Museum inv. 2. After K. A. Sheedy, 1992. "Some Observations on Three Examples of Archaic Sculpture Found on Siphnos. *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 107:Plate 22.1.



Figure 10. Sphinx from Delos (A 583). After P.Bruneau, J. DUCAT, *Guide de Délos*, Athens/Paris, De Boccard, 2005, 97, figure 12.

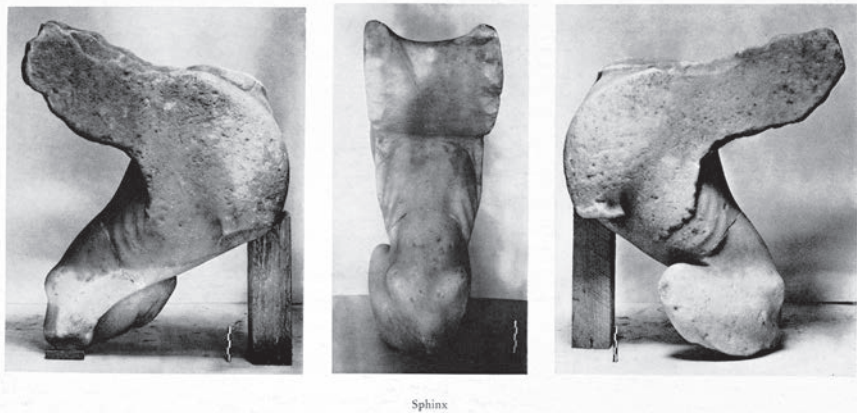


Figure 11. Sphinx from the Delion in Paros. After O. Rubensohn 1962, plate 9 *Das Delion von Paros*. F. Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden.

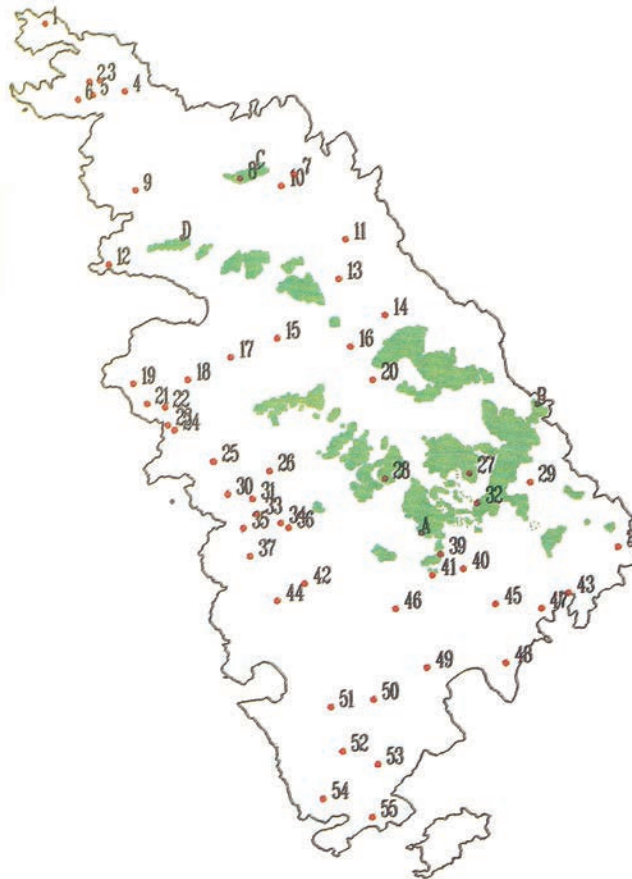


Figure 12. Map with the Towers of Siphnos. After N. G. Ashton, N. 1991, 35. *Siphnos. Ancient Towers* B. C. [s.n.]. Athens.



Figure 13. Remains of the Aspros Tower in Siphnos. Photo Erica Angliker.



Figure 14. Map of Siphnos Showing the location of Aspros Tower. After N. G. Ashton, N. 1991, 132. Siphnos. Ancient Towers B. C. [s.n.]. Athens.

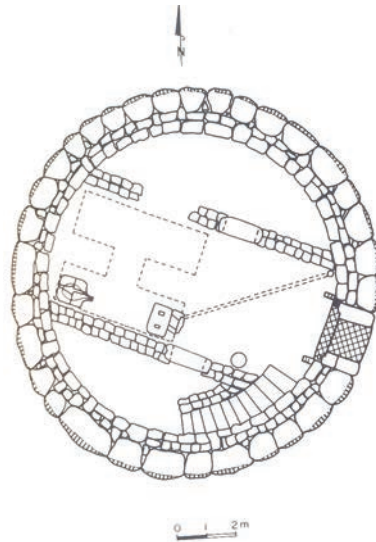


Figure 15. Plan of Aspros Tower. After N. G. Ashton, N. 1991, 133. Siphnos. Ancient Towers B. C. [s.n.]. Athens.

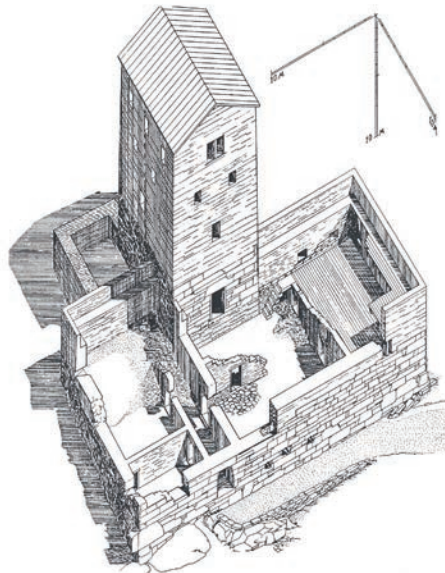


Figure 16. Tower of Aghia Triada in Amorgos. Axometric Restoration. After Korres, M. (2005). "The Tower of Aghia Triada on Amorgos". In *Architecture and Archaeology in the Cyclades: Papers in Honour of J. J. Coulton*, M. Stamatopoulou M. Yeroulanou, editor, 184, figure 7. Archaeopress, Oxford.



Figure 17. Ionic Column Incorporated to the Local Architecture of a House on the Kastro of Siphnos. Photo Erica Angliker



Figure 18. Plan of the Acropolis of Aghios Andreas. After C. A. Televantou, 2013. “Τὸ ἔργο της διαμόρφωσης και ἀνάδειξης της Ἀκρόπολης Ἀγ. Ἀνδρέα Σίφνου”. ”. In: Proceedings of the Fourth International Sifnean Symposium (Sifnos 25-26 June 2010), vol. IV, 19. Athens: Society for Sifnean Studies.



Figure 19. Siphnos Clay Figurine From the Votive Deposit, ca.650BC. After J. K. Brock and Y. G. Mackworth. 1949. "Excavations in Siphnos." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 44, Plate 6.1.



Figure 20. Siphnos Clay figurine From the Votive Deposit, ca. 650BC. After J. K. Brock and Y. G. Mackworth. 1949. "Excavations in Siphnos." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 44, Plate 6.2.



Figure 21. Clay Figurine from Despotiko, ca. 650 BC. Courtesy Yannis Kourayos.



Figure 22. Detail on the Decoration of the Clay Figurine Showing the Parathetic Griffins. After J. K. Brock and Y. G. Mackworth. 1949. "Excavations in Siphnos." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 44, Plate 8.4.



Figure 23. Relief with a representation of Artemis Ephesia from the Archaeological museum in Sifnos. After Zafeiropoulou, F. 2005. “Ανάγλυφες Ἀρτεμις Εφεσίας στη Σίφνο.” In: Proceedings of the Second International Sifnean Symposium (Sifnos 27-30 June 2002), 248, figure 1. Athens: Society for Sifnean Studies.



Figure 24. Roman Sarcophagus on the Kastro of Sifnos. Photo Erica Angliker.