

Ephyra-Epirus: the Mycenaean Acropolis

Results of the excavations
1975-1986 and 2007-2008

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Cover: Ephyra hill (view from the south)

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To our beloved wife, mother and grandmother, Litsa

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Abbreviations

A	Artefacts
C	Classical
Diam.	Diameter
Dims.	Dimensions
H	Hellenistic
Ht(s).	Height(s)
KI, II, II/III, IV	Categories of pottery from Kastritsa and Dodoni (after Dakaris)
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LH	Late Helladic
L	Length(s)
Max.	Maximum
MH	Middle Helladic
MI	Museum of Ioannina
P	Pottery
Pres.	Preserved
Th.	Thickness
XXVI (or KAE)	Trial trench or excavation square

Preface and acknowledgments

This work must be taken as the result of half-finished excavations and research at the prehistoric acropolis of Ephyra (Epirus), which started with some trial trenches conducted in the 1950s by S. Dakaris. It was systematically resumed first (1975) under his direction and in collaboration with the author for the next two seasons (1976-1977), and from 1978-1987 and 2007-8 was continued by myself and my wife under the auspices and financial assistance of both the Archaeological Society and the University of Ioannina. In 2008 it was unjustly stopped, due to bureaucratic and other reasons, although the University of Ioannina was ready to continue its financial and moral support.

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge my obligations and thanks to all those who have helped me in this work. I should like first of all to thank the late Prof. S. Dakaris for his permission and collaboration, and the late Prof. Hammond for his short visit during the excavation and his valuable advice and encouragement. I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance I have received from the Archaeological Society of Athens, the University of Ioannina, the Bodossakis Foundation, the 'Alexandros Onassis' Foundation, and especially from the Institute of Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP). I thank also M. Oikonomidou, Director of the Numismatic Museum for help in dating the coin found in the 'Northwestern building' and Dr Pimpi Heidi of the Archaeological Institute of Heidelberg for dating the clay mortar (θυεΐα). I am equally grateful to the local Ephorates of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and their directors, I. and E. Andreou, I. Vokotopoulou, K. Zachos, G. Riginos and K. Soueref for their kind collaboration and permission to work at the local museums of Ioannina and Preveza. Thanks are also due to the topographers G. Tsonis, P. Karakasidis, and the architects S. and E. Tzimas, D. Skyrgiannis and A. Lagopoulos, for making the plans of the acropolis.

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Th.J.P.

1.

Epirus

Topography, geomorphology, climate, and history of previous research

Situated in the northwestern part of the Greek peninsula (Figure 1) and facing the Ionian Sea, Epirus occupies a most crucial and favourable position for mediating between Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Epirus, however, does not enjoy conditions particularly conducive to intensive economic development. Its landscape (Figure 2) is subject to intense erosion and deposition. Land is mostly rocky and mountainous in the interior, which makes west-east passage difficult. The fertile valleys of the lower Acheron, and between Preveza and Arta (Ambrakia), are small in extent,

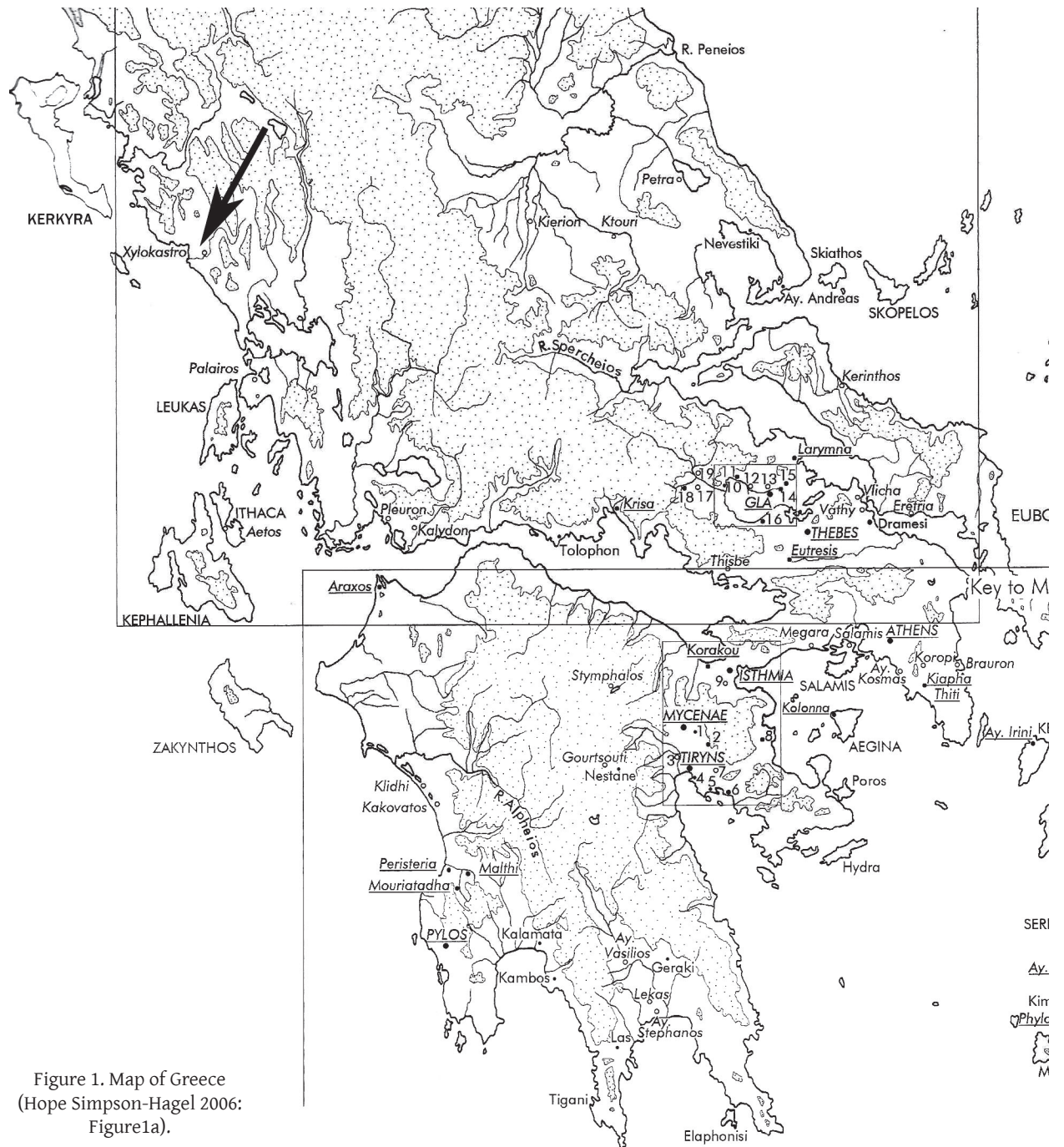


Figure 1. Map of Greece (Hope Simpson-Hagel 2006: Figure1a).



Figure 2. Epirus, geophysical map (Ηπειρος, 4000 χρόνια ελληνικής ιστορίας και πολιτισμού, Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1997: εικ.1).

in contrast with the wide valleys and plains of the adjacent regions of Thessaly and lowland Macedonia. Nevertheless, there are extensive pastures and forests, and the coastline to the west lends itself perfectly to

the development of stock-raising, navigation and sea-trade. In addition the oak-scrub found everywhere in the region provides winter fodder, while a considerable timber-trade transported from the inland to the coast,

and the transhumance of sheep, are practised on a very large scale. The combination of continental and maritime climatic conditions creates a great variety of pastoral, vegetation and agricultural produce. In this geographical setting, and with these natural provisions, the life and culture of the inhabitants developed during the prehistoric period.

As a recent synopsis of the history of previous research on the Bronze Age in the region of Epirus has been given by Th. Tartaron (2004: 18-32), little need be said here. Epirus, in spite of its geo-strategical position and impressive archaeological monuments and finds, was, throughout its history, one of the much neglected peripheral areas of Greece in terms of archaeological research. This was due to a long period of Turkish

occupation and partly to the inattention it received by European antiquarian travellers, whose main interest was to visit and describe the antiquities of southern Greece. Only at the end of the 18th century did this situation change – inaugurated by some pioneers, travellers and military officers, such as the British colonel W. Leake (*Travels in Northern Greece*, vols. I, IV, 1805-1810), the first serious effort to study the region (based on the descriptions of Pausanias, who, however, never visited Epirus). Not long after, C. Wordsworth and W. Gell followed Leake, working and studying the topography, history and archaeology of the region (1830-1860), the results of which were published in Wordsworth's monumental and well-known work (*Greece: Pictorial, Descriptive and Historical*, 1839). After them, the continuation of research was undertaken by

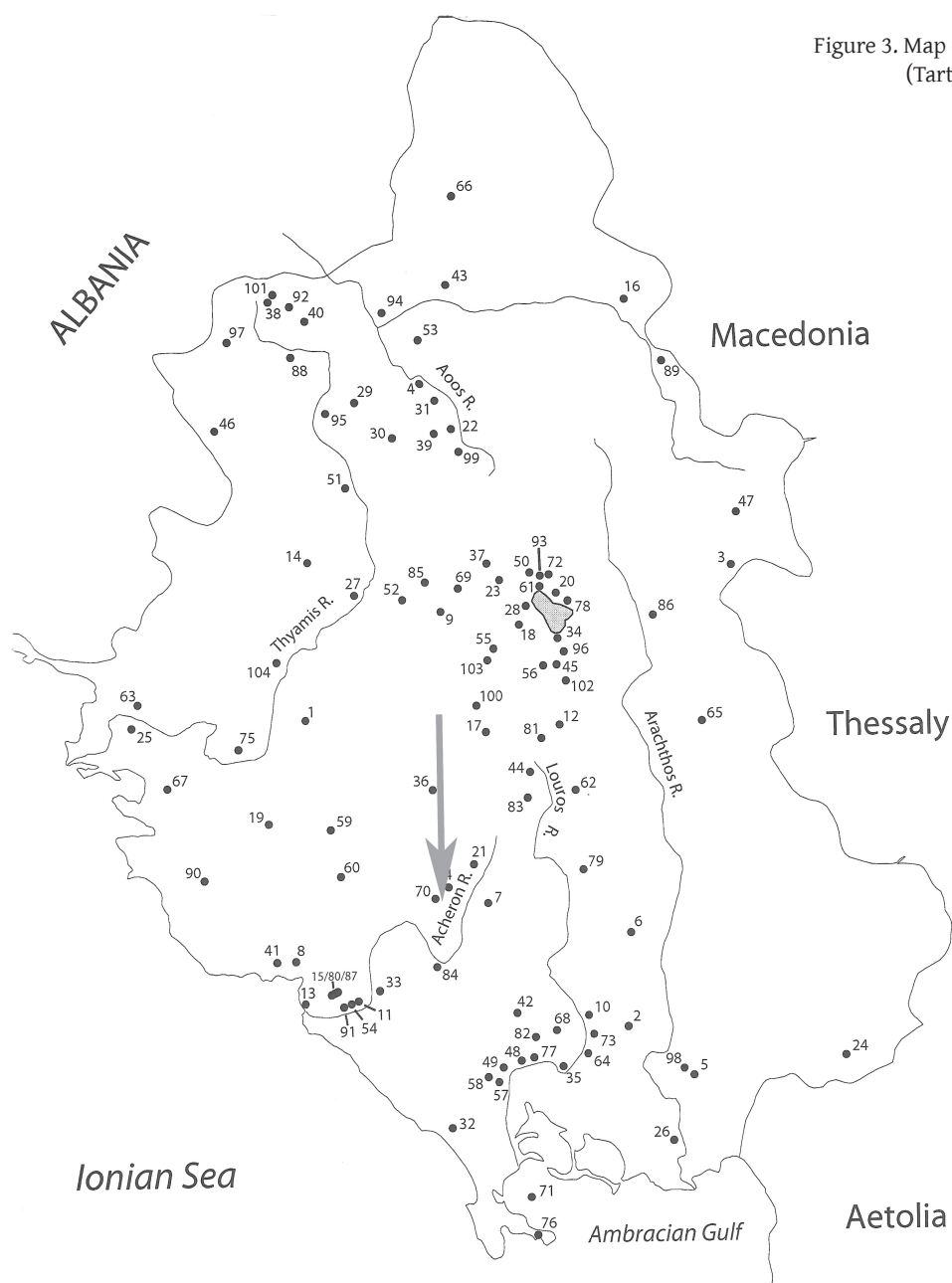


Figure 3. Map of Bronze Age sites in Epirus (Tartaron 2004, fig. 3:3).

K. Karapanos, a politician and amateur archaeologist from Arta (1878), and the Greek archaeologists D. Evangelidis (1929-1933) and S. Dakaris (1959-1990). After the 1970's, work was undertaken by the local Ephorate of Antiquities (I. Vokotopoulou, I.-E. Andreou, A. Douzougli, K. Zachos, Th. Tartaron ("the Nikopolis project"), the Archaeological Society and the University of Ioannina (Th. and L. Papadopoulos, Ch. Souli, A. Oikonomou and K. Gravani).

Of particular interest and importance are also several relevant publications, among which worthy of special mention are those of Evangelidis-Dakaris *To Ιερόν της Δωδώνης*, ΑΕ (1959): 1-164, the monumental work of N. Hammond (*Epirus* 1967), Franke (*Alt-Epirus* 1955), Lepore (*Recherche* 1962), Dakaris (*Das Taubenorakel von Dodona und das Totenorakel bei Ephyra, Antike Kunst*, 1 Beiheft 1963: 51 and *Cassopaia* (1971) and *Θεσπρωτία* (1972), Soueref *Μυκηναϊκές μαρτυρίες από την Ήπειρο* (2001), Papadopoulos (*Η Εποχή του Λίθου and Εποχή του Χαλκού στην Ήπειρο, Δωδώνη* (1974, 1976), *Das mykenische Kuppelgrab von Kiperi bei Parga (Epirus)* 1981, *AM* 96: 7-24, *Το πρόβλημα των εξωτερικών σχέσεων της προϊστορικής Ηπείρου στη 2η χιλιετία π.Χ.*, *Δωδώνη* 1987, 16: 159-164, *Zum Stand der Bronzezeitforschung in Epeiros*, in H.G. Buchholz (ed.) *Ägäische Bronzezeit* (1987): 359-378, *Settlements types in prehistoric Epirus*, *BCH Supplement XIX* (1990), Tartaron and Zachos *The Mycenaean and Epirus in Η Περιφέρεια του Μυκηναϊκού Κόσμου, Πρακτικά του Α' Διεπιστημονικού Συμποσίου, Λαμία 25-29 Σεπτεμβρίου 1994* (Λαμία 1999): 57-76, and Fotiadis in T. Cullen (ed.) 2001, *Aegean Prehistory. A Review*: 315-319. Th. Tartaron's *Bronze Age Landscape and Society in Southern Epirus, Greece* (*British Archaeological Reports International Series 1290*) presents 104 Bronze Age sites found after 1995 (Figure 3), of which 31 have one or more burials, 37 containing bronze weapons or implements, 65 with local pottery, and 13 with imported or imitation Mycenaean sherds (Tartaron 2004: 24-27, Figure 3.3 and table 3.1).