

# Execution by *Styrax* in Ancient Thasos

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Access Archaeology





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## Introduction

In Thasos Island, the most northern of the Aegean Sea, extensive archaeological excavations under the auspices of the Hellenic Antiquities Authority have brought to light a considerable number of archaeological sites, settlements, and activity areas reflective of the human presence in the region since early prehistoric times.<sup>1</sup>

During the 7th century BC the Parians<sup>2</sup> endeavoring from their native island in the Cyclades established themselves in Thasos<sup>3</sup> drawn by the beauty and richness of its natural resources,<sup>4</sup> the diversity of its catchment areas, and the important strategic location for nautical dominance and trade between the Thracian mainland and the regional sea routes (Figure 1). While keeping close ties with its Parian metropolis, Thasos undertook the founding of strongholds and settlements on the mainland<sup>5</sup> as also narrated by poet Archilochus<sup>6</sup> who fought in arms in the region for the establishment of Thasos and its colonies.<sup>7</sup> The city state of Thasos became rich and powerful, widely known in the trade routes of the

<sup>1</sup> Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, Ch., and Papadopoulos, S., (2016), 'The Island of Thasos from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age. Excavation Data and Absolute Dates', in (Ed.) Z. Tsirtsoni, *The human face of radiocarbon*, Travaux Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon, 69, p. 339-358; Nerantzis N., and Papadopoulos S., (2013), 'Reassessment and new data on the diachronic relationship of Thassos Island with its indigenous metal resources: a review', *Journal of Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*, 5:3, p. 183-196; Papadopoulos, S., (2008), 'Silver and Copper Production Practices in the Prehistoric Settlement at Limenaria, Thasos', in (Ed.) I. Tzachili, *Aegean Metallurgy in the Bronze Age, Proceedings of International Symposium*, Rethymnon, 63-71; Lespez, L., and Papadopoulos, S., (2002), 'Palaeoenvironmental Study of Prehistoric Sites on Thassos: Preliminary Results of Geomorphological Research', *Archaiologiko Ergo sti Makedonia kai Thraki*, 16, p. 47-56.

<sup>2</sup> The possibility may be considered for the endeavoring of the Parians in Thasos between the later years of the 8th and the early years of the 7th c. BC, given the findings on their military organizational abilities and capacities during the last decades of the 8th c. BC, see Agelarakis, A. P., (2017), *Parian Polyandria: The Late Geometric Funerary Legacy of Cremated Soldiers' Bones on Socio-Political Affairs and Military Organizational Preparedness in Ancient Greece*, Archaeopress, Oxford; id. (2017), 'Parian Polyandria and the Military Legacy of Archilochus' Forebears', in (Ed.) D. Mulliez, *Métropole et colonies, Proceedings of International Symposium- in memoriam Marina Sgourou*, Recherches Franco-Hellénique, École française d'Athènes, Paris, p. 47-64; Lane Fox, R., (2008), *Travelling Heroes, Greeks and their Myths in the Epic Age of Homer*, p. 388; Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.40: his reference of the Magnetan destruction by the Cimmerian Treres, between 726-660 BC; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 12.625c. Cf. Kohl, M., Muller, A., Sanidas, G., and Sgourou, M., (2002), 'Ο Αποικισμός της Θάσου: η επανεξέταση των αρχαιολογικών δεδομένων', *AEMTh* 16, p. 57-69; Muller, A., (2000), 'L'archéologie de la foundation de Thasos. Lecture critique de la stratigraphie du sondage 'Héraklis Kokkinis'', *Topoi* 10, p. 15-17; *Greek Iambic Poetry: Archilochus, Testimonia*, n<sup>os</sup> 5-11, p. 34-39; Pouilloux, J., (1990), 'Pariens et Thasiens dans le Nord de la Grèce à l'époque archaïque, Μνήμη Δ. Λαζαρίδη. Πόλις και χώρα στην αρχαία Μακεδονία και Θράκη', *Recherches franco-helléniques* 1, p. 485-489.

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus, (2004), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) A.D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., II. 44, p. 331, VI. 46-47, p. 193; Thucydides, (2005), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) C. F. Smith, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., I: C, p. 169, IV: CIV, p. 391.

<sup>4</sup> Pericoastal biotic resources, lumber, marble, gold, silver, copper, and iron resources.

<sup>5</sup> Herodotus, (2004), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) A.D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., VI. 46, p. 193, VII. 108, p. 413.

<sup>6</sup> Archilochus, in Plutarch, *Moralia*, Αποφθέγματα Λακωνικά, 239b; Agelarakis, A. P., (2017), 'Parian Polyandria and the Military Legacy of Archilochus' Forebears', in (Ed.) D. Mulliez, *Métropole et colonies, Proceedings of International Symposium- in memoriam Marina Sgourou*, Recherches Franco-Hellénique, École française d'Athènes, Paris, p. 47-64; Tsantsanoglou K., (2003), 'Archilochus Fighting in Thasos', *Ελληνικά* 53, p. 235-255;

<sup>7</sup> Zafeiropoulou, F., (2008), 'Ζωγραφική και ποίηση στην εποχή του Αρχίλοχου', in (Eds.) D. Katsonopoulou, I. Petropoulos, and S. Katsarou, *Archilochos and his Age, Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Paros and the Archaeology of the Cyclades*, Paros, p. 343-363; Zafeiropoulou, F., and Agelarakis, A. P., (2005), 'Paros Warriors', *Archaeology Magazine*, 58:1, p. 30-35; Tsantsanoglou

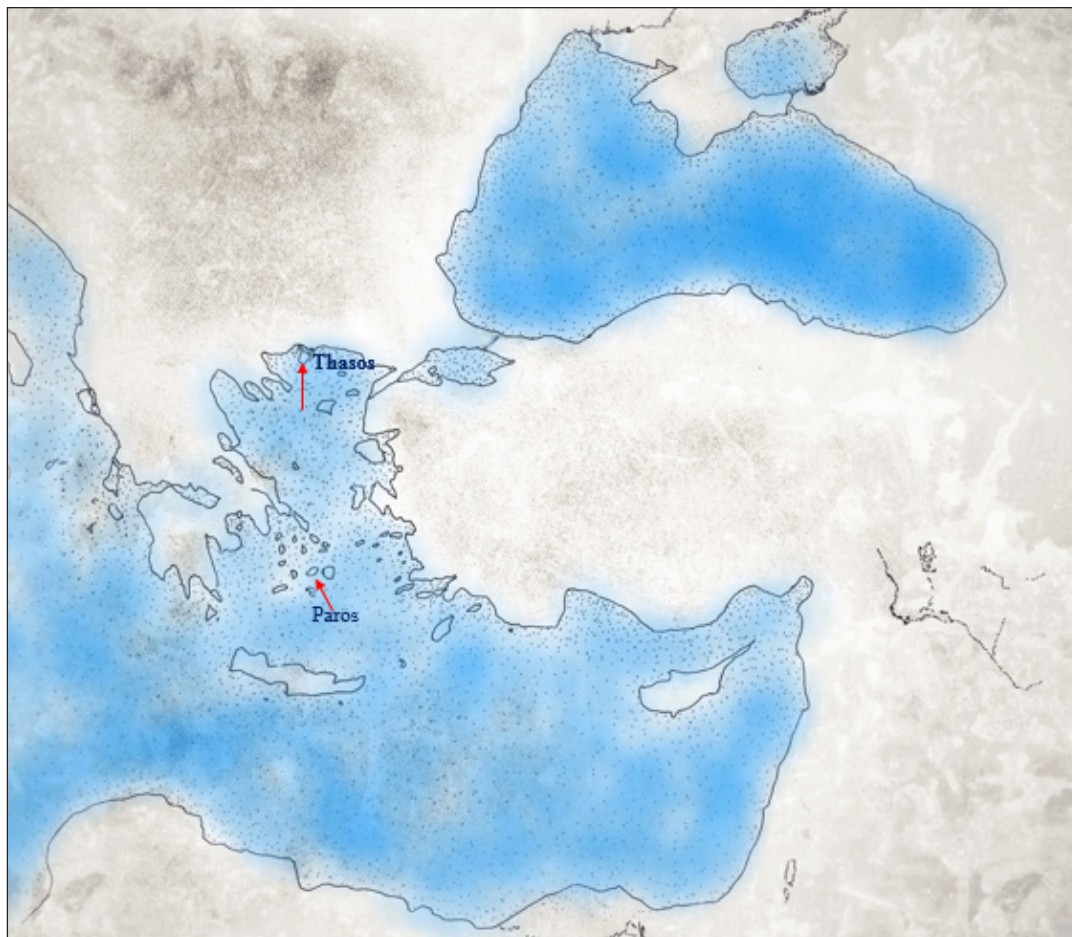


FIGURE 1. MAP OF THE GEOGRAPHIC REGION, PAROS AND THASOS ISLANDS IN THE AEGEAN SEA, WITHIN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN BASIN AND THE ADJOINING CONTEXT OF THE BLACK SEA.



FIGURE 2. SILVER TETRADRACHM OF THASOS. OBVERSE: IVY CROWNED HEAD OF DIONYSUS, FACING LEFT; OBVERSE: ΘΑΣΙΩΝ (*THASION*) [PLURAL GENITIVE FORM OF *THASIOS*], RIGHT KNEELING HERAKLES, FACING RIGHT, RIGHT-HANDED SHOOTING ARROW THROUGH RECURVE BOW, WITH ROSE IN FRONT. WEIGHT: 15.21 GR., DIAMETER 24.0 MM, DIE AXIS 330° (COURTESY OF ALPHA BANK, NUMISMATIC COLLECTION, ATHENS).

Aegean Archipelago and the Eastern Mediterranean, its coinage (Figure 2) found in Syria and Egypt, and its amphorae (Figure 3) for the trade of its acclaimed wine<sup>8</sup> throughout the Aegean to the Black Sea. The dominance and nautical prowess of Thasos were recorded by Herodotus describing the Greco-Persian Wars and later by Thucydides recounting the operations during the Peloponnesian War.<sup>9</sup>

Searching for interpretive answers in engendering an enriched nexus to the attainments and at times wavering dynamics of the ancients at Thasos, the significant assemblages and splendor of archaeological findings in conjunction with a substantial record of anthropological remains excavated provided for a well-endowed framework of cross-disciplinary research endeavors (Figure 4) aiming to investigate, decipher, and where pertinent fine-tune our understandings on aspects of the human condition in the island during antiquity.<sup>10</sup>

K., (2003), 'Archilochus Fighting in Thasos', *Ελληνικά*, 53, p. 235-255; Tsantsanoglou K., (2000), 'Ο Αρχίλοχος και ο λαός του', in (Eds.) Ph. I. Kakridis, G. M. Siphakis, and I. Touloumakos, *Κτερίσματα. Φιλολογικά Μελετήματα αφιερωμένα στον Ιω. Σ. Καμπίση*, p. 369-393; Salviat, F., (1963), *La colonisation grecque dans le Nord de l'Égée, VIII<sup>e</sup> Congrès international d'archéologie classique*, p. 299-303.

<sup>8</sup> Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* VIII. 364d, 431a, 432c; *id.* XI. 478d; *id.* XIII. 579e, 641f.

<sup>9</sup> Herodotus, VI. 46-47; Thucydides, (2003), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) C. F. Smith, *Loeb Classical Library*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., I. C-CI. p. 166-170, VIII. LXIV, p. 298-300; cf. Plutarch, *Lives, Cimon*, (2001), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) B. Perrin, *Loeb Classical Library*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., XIV. 1-2, p. 446-448.

<sup>10</sup> Vakirtzi, S., Koukouli-Chrysanthaki C., and Papadopoulos S., (2014), 'Spindle whorls from two prehistoric sites on Thassos', in (Eds.) M. Harlow, Michel, C., and L. M. Nosch, *Prehistoric, Ancient Near Eastern and Aegean Textiles and Dress. An interdisciplinary anthology*, Oxbow Books, pp. 43-57; Papadopoulos, S., (2005), 'The Island of Thasos before Written Sources. Recent Investigations in the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age', in (Eds.) J. Bourek, and L. Domaradzka, *The Culture of Thracians and their Neighbours, BAR International Series*, 1350, p. 245-252; Agelarakis, A. P., (1999), 'Reflections of the Human Condition in Prehistoric Thasos: Aspects of the Anthropological and Palaeopathological Record from the Settlement of Kastri', *Actes du Colloque International Matières premières et Technologie de la Préhistoire à nos jours, Limenaria*, Thasos, French Archaeological Institute in Greece, Athens, p. 447-468; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, Ch., Sgourou M., and Agelarakis, A. P., (1997), 'Archaeological Investigations in the Necropolis of Ancient Thasos 1979-1996', *AEMTh*, 10, p. 770-794; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, Ch., (1992), *Proto-Historic Thasos. The Cemeteries of the Settlement of Kastri* (in Greek), *Archaiologiko Deltion*, 45:I-III; Agelarakis, A. P., (1992), 'Linen Thread Fragment', in Ch. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, *Proto-Historic Thasos. The Cemeteries of the Settlement of Kastri*, *Archaiologiko Deltion*, 45:II, 1992, p: 803.



FIGURE 3. ILLUSTRATION OF AMPHORA HANDLE STAMPED ΘΑΣΙΩΝ (THASION) [PLURAL GENITIVE FORM OF THASIOS], RIGHT KNEELING HERAKLES, FACING RIGHT, RIGHT-HANDED SHOOTING ARROW THROUGH RECURVE BOW (ARTIFACT COURTESY OF LATE DR. MARINA SGOUROU, HELLENIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE, CHIEF ARCHAEOLOGIST FOR THE ANCIENT CITY OF THASOS).



FIGURE 4. IN THASOS AGORA REGION WITH COLLABORATOR, LATE DR. MARINA SGOUROU, HELLENIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE, CHIEF ARCHAEOLOGIST FOR THE ANCIENT CITY OF THASOS; OFFERING A GUIDED TOUR TO THE ADELPHI STUDENT FIELD TEAM THROUGH THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDMARKS, IN YEAR 1996.

### Archaeo-anthropological research in Thasos island

While carrying out funerary archaeological research at the extensive necropolis of ancient Thasos,<sup>11</sup> clusters of Hellenistic to Roman periods family graves were investigated at the proximity of the ancient shoreline (*Myroni* site) at the western outskirts of the ancient city (Figure 5). The anthropological remains recovered comprised a population sample of 57 individuals, buried either as single or multiple interments. Bioarchaeological analyses of the anthropological remains<sup>12</sup> identified the involvement of

<sup>11</sup> Papadopoulos, E., Agelarakis, A. P., and Tsoutsoubei, S., (2012), 'Burial Customs at Thasos: From the Neolithic to the Hellenistic periods', *Kavala and the Balkans, Kavala and Thrace: History, Arts-Culture from Antiquity to Modernity*, Historic and Ethnographic Archive of Kavala, p: 1023-1042; Agelarakis, A. P., (2002), 'Investigations of Physical Anthropology & Palaeopathology at the Ancient Necropolis of Thasos', in M. Sgourou, 'Excavating houses and graves: exploring aspects of everyday life and afterlife in ancient Thasos', in (Eds.) M. Stamatopoulou, M. Yeroulanou, *Excavating Classical Culture, BAR International Series 1031*, p. 12-19; *id.* (2001), 'Report on the Anthropological Forensic and Palaeopathological Study of a Select Number of Human Skeletal Individuals from the Ancient Necropolis of Thasos', in M. Sgourou, 'Jewelry from Thasian Graves', *ABSA 96*, p. 355-364; *id.* (2000), *BioArchaeological Study of the Roman to Palaeo-Christian Period Human Skeletal Remains Excavated from the Ancient Theater Site of Thasos*, Archival Report, Prehistoric and Classical Museum of Thasos, IH' Ephoreia of the Greek Archaeological Service; Koukouli-Chrisanthaki, Ch., Sgourou M., and Agelarakis, A. P., (1997), 'Archaeological Investigations in the Necropolis of Ancient Thasos 1979-1996', *AEMTh*, 10, p. 770-794.

<sup>12</sup> Christensen, M. A., Passalacqua, V. N., and Bartelink, J. E., (2014), *Forensic Anthropology: Current Methods and Practice*, Elsevier, New York; Buikstra, J.E., and Beck, L. A., (2006), *Bioarchaeology: The contextual analysis of human remains*, Elsevier, New York; Bass, M.W., (2005), *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual*, Missouri Archaeological Society, Special Publication 2, Columbia; Grauer, L. A., and Stuart-Macadam, P., (Eds.), (1998), *Sex and Gender in Paleopathological Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Buikstra, J.E., and Ubelaker, H. D., (1994), (Eds.) 'Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains', *Arkansas archaeological Survey Research Series*, 44; White, D. T., and Folkens, A.P., (1991), *Human Osteology*, New York, Academic