

The Prehistory
of the
Paximadi Peninsula, Euboea



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The Prehistory of the Paximadi Peninsula, Euboea

by

*Tracey Cullen, Lauren E. Talalay, Donald R. Keller,
Lia Karimali, and William R. Farrand*



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Preface

In the following pages we present the results of two related fieldwork projects: a brief salvage excavation at Plakari, a Final Neolithic site near the modern town of Karystos in southern Euboea, and a survey of prehistoric sites on the Paximadi peninsula, the western arm of the Karystos bay. Both ventures were part of the larger mission of the Southern Euboea Exploration Project, better known as SEEP. A multidisciplinary research program conducted under the auspices of the Canadian Archaeological Institute in Athens (now the Canadian Institute in Greece), SEEP is dedicated to the study of the Karystian past and has maintained a presence in southern Euboea for over 25 years. The groundwork for the organization was laid in 1979 when Donald Keller first visited the area to begin a one-man survey of the watershed of the Karystos bay for his doctoral dissertation. At that time, the most detailed account of the Karystian historical landscape was an 88-page topographical section in Malcolm Wallace's 1972 thesis. Wallace was living in Athens in 1979, and the two began a close collaboration and friendship. As both Keller and Wallace recognized the untapped potential for long-term archaeological research in the Karystia, they founded SEEP in 1984, incorporating it as a nonprofit research project in 1986.

Under the direction of Keller and Wallace, SEEP has carried out a series of surveys and short-term excavations at promising sites in the Karystia. Survey has identified over 400 sites spanning the Final Neolithic to Ottoman periods around the Karystos bay, and excavations have unearthed intriguing remains of prehistoric and later sites. Discovery and identification of these sites have become increasingly important as development accelerates rapidly in the area. Particularly on the Paximadi peninsula, newly built roads, construction of water pipelines, and the

recent proliferation of summerhouses are obliterating much of the fragile archaeological record and transforming a landscape that was largely uninhabited as late as the mid-1990s.

Prior to the work of Keller and Wallace and the teams of volunteers they later brought into the Karystia, very little was known archaeologically about the area. Only a few Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman sites had been documented in early 20th-century reports, and the prehistoric information available for the area could be summarized in a few short paragraphs. Keller's work in 1979 and the early 1980s included a brief salvage excavation at the site of Plakari, exposed during illegal bulldozing in the 1970s. Building on Keller's research and earlier Greek and British reconnaissance visits to the area, SEEP carried out a survey of the Paximadi peninsula during the summers of 1986 and 1988. Study seasons and site revisits took place over subsequent years. Inspired by the project's unofficial motto, *SEEP and You Shall Find*, survey teams identified 163 sites on the peninsula, 20 of which can be assigned to the later part of the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age. The material from these prehistoric sites is presented here as the basis for our current understanding of the earliest settlement of the Paximadi peninsula and the role of southern Euboea in the wider Aegean.

This volume appears after a long hiatus and undeniably bears the stamp of the times in which the work was conceived and carried out. Survey in the Mediterranean has changed radically over the past few decades. The methods by which data were collected on the Paximadi peninsula and the suitability of those data for the questions asked by modern practitioners are topics of concern for us. We have tried to be explicit throughout the volume about the limitations of the archaeological sample—and cautious in the conclusions that we have drawn. While any delay in publishing the results of archaeological work is regrettable, it nevertheless can bring advantages. In our case, we have benefited from the substantial amount of fieldwork undertaken subsequently in the Karystia and elsewhere in the Aegean, which has allowed us to place the Paximadi peninsula into a broader context of study.

The decision to separate the prehistoric components of the survey from the larger project was made after some deliberation. One cannot deny the value of a diachronic perspective on changing patterns of land use and habitation in a single region, which is only possible with a multi-period survey. Focusing exclusively on the prehistoric remains, however, has permitted us to consider in detail a critical period of time not well understood by Aegean prehistorians—the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age—and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the period's definition and significance.

Once the decision to dedicate an entire volume to the prehistoric remains was made, the writing began. As the columnist Red Smith memorably quipped, "There's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein." After considerable effort, we eventually were able to coordinate the schedules and contributions of all the authors, and we offer here the data, our interpretations, and the many questions raised by our investigations of prehistory on the Paximadi peninsula and its place within the larger Greek world. We regret only that Malcolm (Mac) Wallace did not live to see this volume published. One of the directors of SEEP, and a long-time source of inspiration, support, and encouragement to SEEP participants, Mac was also keenly interested in the earliest settlement of the Karystia. It is in memory of Mac that we dedicate this volume on the emerging prehistory of the Paximadi peninsula.



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house in Karystos. By maintaining the “SEEP house” for many years, Mac also provided SEEP with a research center for volunteers, staff, and visitors, and an invaluable base from which to work year-round.

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It has taken the proverbial village to produce the line drawings, maps, and photographs for this volume, many of which were drawn or taken in the 1980s and subsequently inked and refined. For help in Karystos, we thank the volunteers who prepared initial drawings and took photographs and in particular those who worked on the final images: Ayla Akin, Ans Hom, Els Hom, Olga Kalentzidou, Ingrid Keller, William Parkinson, and Susan Predović. In Ann Arbor and Princeton, many individuals helped prepare the artwork for publication: Björn Anderson, Cory Cody, Elizabeth de Grummond, Sarah Figueira, Jennifer Gates-Foster, Mary Jane Gavenda, Todd Gerring, Jennifer Scroggins, Lorene Sterner, and Drew Wilburn. Our thanks to all, and particularly to Todd and Mary Jane for the many hours they dedicated to SEEP. We are also grateful to Vasiliki Giannouli, the current ephor of the 11th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in Chalkis, for permission to include photographs of the architectural remains at Agia Pelagia; to Maria Chidiroglou for her image of rock-cut niches at Plakari; to Žarko Tankosić for her accommodating last-minute requests for photographs; and to Hans Goette and Joachim Heiden of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Berlin and Athens for providing us with aerial photographs of the Karystia.

In our efforts to decipher the prehistory of the Paximadi peninsula, we have benefited enormously from conversations with numerous colleagues, many of whom generously shared preprints of their work. While it is impossible to name everyone, we would like to single out Cyprian Broodbank, William Cavanagh, Maria Chidiroglou, John Coleman, Jan-Paul Crielaard, Jack Davis, Hans Goette, Paul Halstead, Anna Karabatsoli, Daniel Pullen, Jeremy Rutter, Cynthia Shelmerdine, and Peter Tomkins. In writing this book, we have built upon the earlier work of others who have explored the prehistoric Karystia, especially Demetrios Theocharis, Thomas Jacobsen, Hugh Sackett, and Adamantios Sampson. Our understanding of the pottery from the Paximadi peninsula was enhanced by the opportunity to visit other museums and examine their holdings. We would like to thank in particular Efi Sapouna-Sakellarakis, who greatly facilitated our visit to the Archaeological Museum in Chalkis; Adamantios Sampson, who showed us the material from Tharrounia, took us around the site, and was a gracious host during our visit; and Vassilis Aravantinos, who allowed us access to the pottery from Eutresis housed at the Archaeological Museum at Thebes.

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Following the completion of the Paximadi survey, other research conducted in the Karystia revealed material crucial to our understanding of prehistory on the peninsula. Žarko Tankosić has been at the center of much of this subsequent work. We are indebted not only to Žarko, but also to Fanis Mavridis and Maria Chidiroglou for allowing us to summarize the results of their projects. We further thank Žarko for giving us access to a draft of his dissertation and for much helpful discussion and support. His dissertation, completed in 2011, is a thoughtful narrative on the early prehistory of the Karystia that both makes use of our work on Paximadi and adds to it by synthesizing a larger context.

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If we can now claim to have a better understanding of the prehistory of the Paximadi peninsula, and to have produced a useful book, it is due in no small measure to those we have acknowledged here.



List of Abbreviations

For abbreviations of ancient works, see the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed., S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., Oxford 1996. Other abbreviations used in the text are listed below.

A	Archaic	ext.	exterior
avg.	average	FN	Final Neolithic
B	Byzantine	G	Geometric
Bg.	black glaze	g	gram
C	Classical	H	Hellenistic
ca.	circa	h.	height
CAIA	Canadian Archaeological Institute at Athens	ha	hectare
cal.	calibrated	indet.	indeterminate
Ch.	chapter	int.	interior
CIG	Canadian Institute in Greece	km	kilometers
cm	centimeter	L	lithic artifact catalog prefix
diam.	diameter	L.	length
E	East	LBA	Late Bronze Age
EB	Early Bronze	LG	Late Geometric
EBA	Early Bronze Age	LN	Late Neolithic
EC	Early Cycladic	m	meter
EH	Early Helladic	m asl	meters above sea level
EM	Early Minoan	max. dim.	maximum dimension
esp.	especially	MBA	Middle Bronze Age
		mg	microgram

MG	Middle Geometric	SE	southeast
mm	millimeter	SEEP	Southern Euboea Exploration Project
N	north	SW	southwest
n	sample size	th.	thickness
OXALID	Oxford Archaeological Lead Isotope Database	TIMS	thermal ionization mass spectrometry
pers. comm.	personal communication	V	varia catalog prefix
pers. obs.	personal observation	W	west
PG	Protogeometric	w.	width
pres.	preserved	wt.	weight
R	Roman	XRF	X-ray fluorescence
S	south		
S	surface sherd catalog prefix		