

## Research report - Lemnos 2002

### *On the tracks of the Lemnian Amazons*

Aim of our exploring expedition was to find prehistoric traces which can be connected with the Amazons. Many relics have been discovered and investigated in consideration of our current research results on the Thermodon Amazons in northern Turkey - the classical homeland of the Amazons.

In ancient tradition the island Lemnos (also Limnos) was much connected with the Amazons. The ancients called this island *predominated by women*.

On this island in the northern Aegean there existed a high-developed civilization. They developed a refined culture with impressive cities, mighty fortresses and mysterious sanctuaries. The most important places were [Poliochni](#) in the east, [Myrina](#) in the west, and [Hephaistia](#) in the north. These three main settlements are suggestive of the ancient tradition that the Thermodon Amazons were also parted into three tribes.

#### **Poliochni:**

The discovery of the Early Bronze Age settlement at Poliochni was sensational. Due to its extent and its high development it is considered to be the oldest city of Europe.

The site is on a low hill at a wide bay. The settlement consists of an entanglement of mostly small houses which were square or rectangular in plan. The walls have been made of small and medium-sized mostly unworked stones.



The construction of the city is rather uniform, there seem to be no or only very little social differences which is typical for matriarchal cultures.

There is an outstanding type of building in Poliochni, the so-called megaron. A megaron is an oblong building with a roofed antechamber at the narrow side.

In Poliochni two megarons are distinctive.

The first one is located in the center of the settlement, and forms with adjoining rooms a separate complex of buildings. It is obvious that this building was a very important one (room 605). Moreover, there has been found a very precious hoard of gold in one of the adjoining rooms (see the gold pin below).



The second prominent megaron is situated on the top of the hill occupying a strategic position where the whole city and the environment can be overlooked.



The two dominating megaron buildings match with the ancient account that the Amazons have been commanded by two queens. According to the ancients there have been two Amazon queens at the same time. One queen was in charge of the army (megaron on the top of the hill), whereas the other one was responsible for the internal affairs (megaron in the center).

At all, there can be discerned a general duality - a principle that the main elements occur two-fold. There are two main squares, two main roads, two wells, and two outstanding megarons.

This dualism can also be discerned in pottery (two-handled cups, bowls ...) and gold jewelry (compare the picture below of a gold pin with two animal heads).

Along the shore there runs a main road which is gradient from north to south. At the beginning of this road there is a paved oblong well, whereas the second well at the bend of this road is circular. There is a small square with a drain made of stone.

In the ruins there have been found many household utensils (pottery, mortars, mill-stones). Furthermore, you see the remains of a communal granary with large pithoi (= large earthen vessels ).

In the southwestern part of the settlement there was unearthed an impressive building. Because of its appearance it was called Bouleuterion. Bouleuterion is the Greek word for meeting place.



The western part is surrounded by a strong wall made of stones. In this fortification there are small apertures which were obviously used by archers for the defense of the city.

This is a clear clue to the Amazons who were reputed to be great archers.



Wall with aperture used by archers



Arrow-head

This fact is all the more significant because only on Lemnos there have been found arrow-heads within this region at this period.

Furthermore, there has been found a huge number of battle-axes. This was the typical weapon of the Amazons as can be seen on many Greek vase-paintings.



There has been found a great number of delicate tools made of bone and metal like finely shaped pins. They have obviously served for cosmetic purposes - which perfectly fit in this women culture. But also some more or less abstract roundish-shaped idols have been discovered. These figures represent the «Great Goddess» - the main goddess of matriarchal civilization.



Abstract idols



Female idol



Gold pin with animal (bird ?) ornamentation

In the ruins of this Early Bronze Age settlement there has been discovered a splendid hoard of gold. It mainly consists of jewelry. There are ear-rings, bracelets, rings, needles, pins – all these objects fit very well in this women culture.

Symbols in the shape of vulva and phallus were very popular in cultures predominated by women because they represented fertility. Vulva-shaped slots, drilled holes and cavities are existing in great number but also phallus-shaped symbols can be seen - as counterpart of female fertility, though vulva-shaped representations prevail.

At Poliochni there was discovered a phallus-shaped pillar made of stone standing right in the center of the room.



But in most of the buildings at Poliochni there has been found a big mortar or pot in the center of the room - presumably as symbol of female predominance.



## **Castle of Myrina:**

The impressive remains of Myrina castle date from the Byzantine, Venetian, Genoese and Turkish period, but there are also a lot of vestiges and constructions from the prehistoric time.



These prehistoric remains are highly visible. So you see a mighty wall made of big boulders (a so-called cyclopien or pelasgian wall).



There are many rock-cut staircases which are very similar to those we have discovered in Karpu Kale and Tekkeköy at the Thermodon region. The picture below shows a system of staircases leading steeply upwards, and a rock-cut bench which looks like a tribune.



You perceive rock-cut buildings, platforms, artificial cavities, and drilled holes.



You detect sluices built into the rock, rectangular rock niches, and the characteristic representations of human genitals.

On the left picture below you see a rock with the unmistakable shape of a vulva, a very likely rock-cut presentation was found at a prehistoric sanctuary in the Thermodon delta.

But also the male genital has been figured several times, mostly as rock sculpture but also as rock-drawing (right picture below).



Very remarkable is our discovery of a prehistoric rock engraving showing human figures which are faintly discernible but clear-cut (see the photo below).

You see two persons standing back-to-back. The left figure seems to be male and holds something in his outstretched arm. Because of his appearance he seems to be an adorant (a male youth in praying position). The right smaller figure is obviously a woman. She seems to wear a headdress, maybe a helmet made of animal skin like the lion cap of Heracles. Due to the interpretation of this figure as woman with helmet it seems plausible that this rock engraving shows an Amazon.



Similar mysterious rock engravings have been discovered in Hephaistia in the north of Lemnos. The preliminary promontory with prehistoric traces is called «Ekato Kefalon», which means translated «Hundred Heads».

At the northern slope of Myrina castle - just opposite the sanctuary of Richa Nera - there is a place with two artificial platforms steeply hanging over the sea. Its position facing the demonic rock face of Richa Nera suggests that it was a place of sacrifice or of ritual killing.



The place of sacrifice facing Richa Nera



One of the artificial platforms steeply hanging over the sea

On the crest of Myrina castle there are also many prehistoric vestiges. A slab in the western part facing the open sea shows grooves which are orientated to the sea. The spot probably served as viewpoint for the observation of the spectacular sunset over the Athos mountain. A significant pointed stone farther to the west may have been the fixed point. Here you can watch a impressive phenomenon. The sun sets exactly over the mountain top dyeing the horizon blazing red.



The foundation walls of the medieval buildings on the castle hill show the same construction as the houses in Poliochni. Apparently, the substructure of the prehistoric houses has been reused. Also in the medieval walls there can be detected building blocks which have been reused from prehistoric buildings.

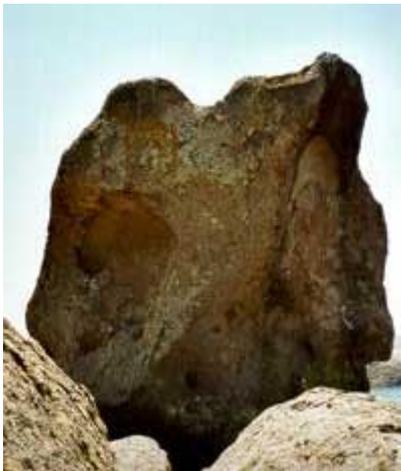
Concerning prehistoric construction there can be discerned two different types. Dwelling houses have been built by using small or middle-sized unworked stones, whereas fortresses and sanctuaries have been cut into the rock, and the walls have been constructed by big boulders (pelasgian wall).

## Richa Nera I

To the north opposite the castle of Myrina at the Richa Nera beach there is a cragged little hill.



When you ascend this hill you immediately come across prehistoric traces. It is obvious that it must have been a sanctuary. This is officially acknowledged because there is a signpost for it (-> *sanctuary*). The striking feature of this rocky hill is that the topmost boulder bears the lineaments of a demonic scowling face. It must be clarified by thorough investigation if this rock has got its appearance by workmanship or by freak of nature. On the basis of the many prehistoric traces which can be discerned on this hill fortuitousness doesn't seem probable. This significant rocky hill is orientated to the castle of Myrina. A connection with the place of sacrifice which is directly facing Richa Nera seems plausible.



On the left picture you see the demonic scowling rock-face from behind, on the right picture you see the prehistoric ascent and the remains of the wall.

The boulders of the hill are frequently ornamented with drilled holes, a big artificial hole is orientated to the west (orientation to the Athos mountain ?). Within this prehistoric enclosure there is a rectangular place of worship.



Some marks on the left wall of this sanctuary are enigmatic. There are two rows of little rectangular holes.

### **Richa Nera II:**

Some meters east of the Richa Nera beach there is another rocky hill where prehistoric workmanship can clearly be seen. You find there rock-cut stairs, drilled holes and an artificial rock-cut ascent. The features are the same as those found at Myrina castle and Richa Nera, as well as those we have discovered in the Thermo don area.



Rock staircase



Ascent to the sanctuary

On the top of this hill (today there is a Cyprus memorial) you find the remains of a rock-cut sanctuary.



From Richa Nera II you have in sight as well Richa Nera I as Myrina castle. These three places form a triangle in air-line distance. The connection of these places in prehistoric time is evident.

### **Avlonas:**

At Avlonas, north of Myrina, there has been discovered an important sanctuary of Artemis which dates from the first millennium BC. In fact, it is an amazing parallel that quite near to the ancient home of the Lemnian Amazons there has been founded a sanctuary for that virgin goddess who was connected with the Amazons in so many respects.

An eye-catching rock formation nearby resembles the appearance of a horse head. It is uncertain if this rock has got its shape by freak of nature or by workmanship.



The Amazons actually had a close relation to horses. They were regarded as excellent horse-women. But even in religion the horse was of significance for the Amazons. On their sacred island Aretias in northern Turkey they shall have immolated horses.

In this connection it is remarkable that today there still exists a horse tradition on Lemnos. Every year a traditional horse race takes place in Kalliopi.

## **Hephaistia:**

Hephaistia (also Ifestia) is situated in the north of Lemnos, and it was a place of religious importance from the Neolithic to the beginning of Christianity.

There is the interesting aspect that at Greek and Roman times in Hephaistia there was a sanctuary of the «Great Goddess», who is considered to be the main goddess of matriarchal civilization. So it's not amazing that in Hephaistia there have been found many prehistoric vestiges.

The cape named «Ekato Kefalon» is of special importance. The name means translated «Hundred Heads», because on the rock walls there are faintly discernible rock-drawings of demonic heads.



Doubtless, here are the prehistoric remains of a formerly mighty construction which was cut into the rock.



You can clearly see elaborate rectangular wall structures.



The ruins at cape «Ekato Kefalon» are evidently the remains of a prehistoric sea fortress. The construction is very similar to that of the fortress Tekkeköy in the Thermodon region, which is considered to be the fortress of the Amazon city Chadesia. According to this concurrence the rock fortress at cape «Ekato Kefalon» can be related to the Amazon culture.

## Conclusions:

According to our recent research work following facts and indications can be stated:

- Within this region only on Lemnos there have been found arrow-heads at this period, and the wall in Poliochni had apertures which were obviously used by archers for the defense of the city.  
⇒ *The Amazons have been famous archers*
- On this island there has been discovered a huge number of battle-axes.  
⇒ *Battle-axes were the typical weapon of the Amazons*
- There is a living horse tradition on Lemnos.  
⇒ *Die Amazons were regarded as excellent horse-women*
- There has been found a great number of delicate tools made of bone and metal like finely shaped pins. They have obviously served for cosmetic purposes - which perfectly fits in this women culture.  
⇒ *Clear indication of a society predominated by women*
- Vulva-shaped rock monuments on Lemnos as well as in the Thermodon region give evidence of the adoration of women, respectively of the «Great Goddess», the main goddess of matriarchal civilization.  
⇒ *Distinct indication of matriarchal religion*
- The artifacts (pottery, weapons, tools ...) show amazing parallels to those from the Thermodon culture of the second millennium BC in Asia Minor. This civilization (also called Dündartepe culture) with its center at the river Thermodon in northern Turkey is considered to be the classical Amazon culture as has been handed down by the ancient writers. Its influence was so strong that even the today's Turkish name of the river reflects the old name (Terme Çay = Thermodon)  
⇒ *Conformity of the artifacts from Lemnos with those from the Thermodon region*
- The fortress and sanctuary construction on Lemnos and in the Thermodon region are almost the same. The identical structures are: rock-cut staircases, platforms, niches, vulva-shaped slots and drilled holes, walls consisting of boulders.  
⇒ *Evident conformity of prehistoric building construction on Lemnos with that in the Thermodon region*

Our investigations on Lemnos have increased our knowledge of the Amazons in many respects. We have detected a lot of conformity and concurrence between the Thermodon region – the classical homeland of the Amazons – and Lemnos. These parallels are so striking that a connection between the Thermodon Amazons and the Lemnian Amazons seems to be indisputable. Furthermore, it is possible that we have discovered the first contemporary representation of an Amazon in a prehistoric rock engraving.