



SANTO TINÉ - ANTONELLA TRAVERSO

Santo Tiné was born in Sicily in 1927. He received his MA degree from Harvard University. Between 1963 and 1999 he served as professor of Prehistoric and Aegean Archaeology at the University of Genoa. His research interests focus on the introduction and dissemination of farming in the Mediterranean. Since 1987 he is the director of the Poliochni excavations. He is the president of the Italian Institute of Experimental Archaeology.

Antonella Traverso was born in Genoa in 1962. She studied Archaeology at the University of Genoa and received her PhD in Prehistoric Archaeology from the University La Sapienza in Rome. She is a member of the Poliochni excavations since 1988. In 1995 she became Assistant Professor of Museology at the University of Genoa.



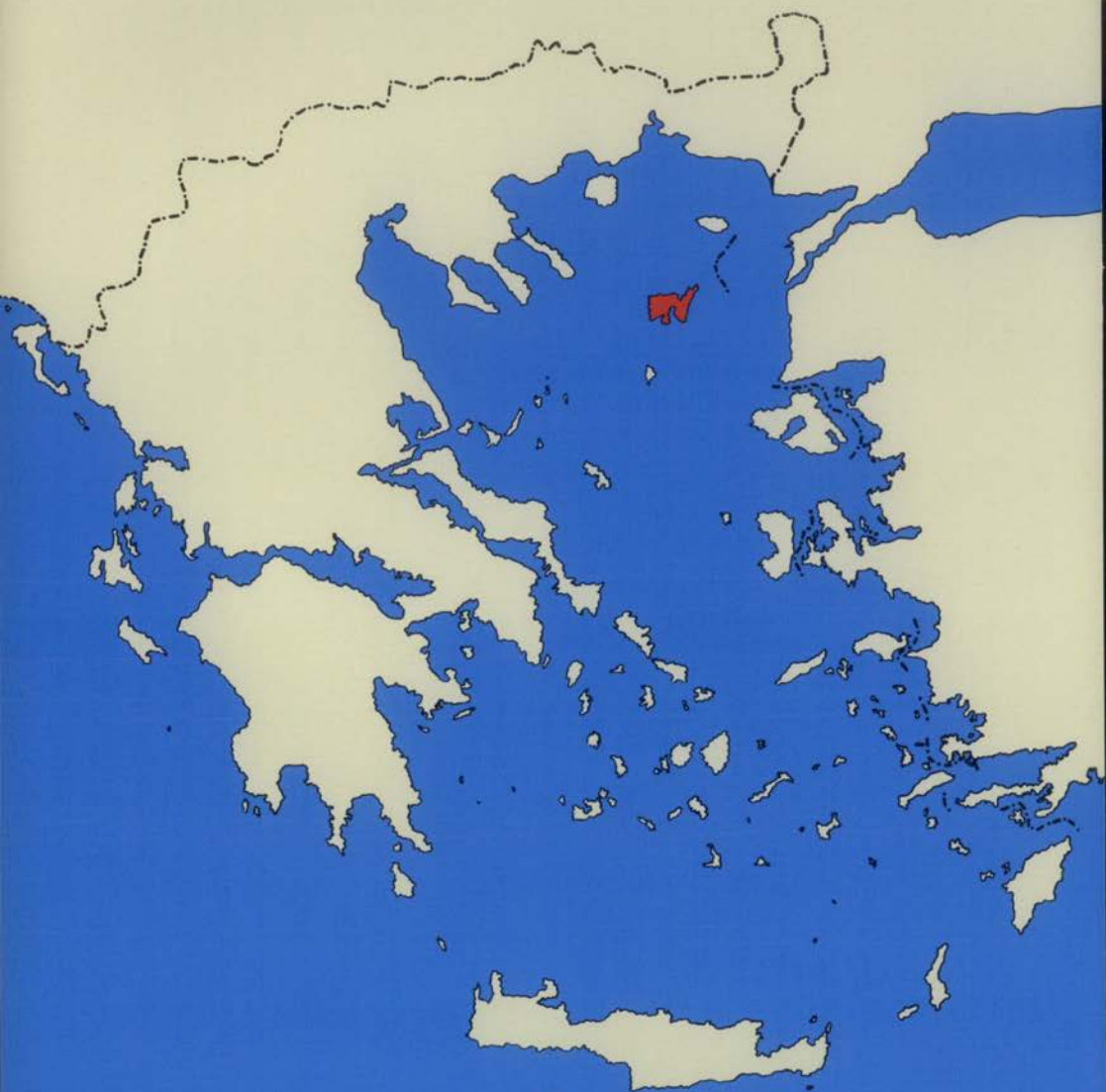
POLIOCHNI

THE EARLIEST TOWN IN EUROPE

ATHENS 2001

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ANCIENT SITES AND MUSEUMS IN GREECE

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TRANSLATION ANGELIKI KOSMOPOULOU



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YEAR B.C.	TROY	POLIOCHNI	MAINLAND	CYCLADES	CRETE	EGYPT
3100			FINAL NEOLITHIC	FINAL NEOLITHIC	FINAL NEOLITHIC	LATE PREDYNASTIC
3000	0					
2900	I		EARLY HELLADIC I	EARLY CYCLADIC I	EARLY MINOAN I	
2800						
2700						EARLY DYNASTIC
2600						EARLY KINGDOM
2500	II		EARLY HELLADIC II	EARLY CYCLADIC II	EARLY MINOAN II	
2400						
2300						
2200	III		EARLY HELLADIC III	EARLY CYCLADIC III	EARLY MINOAN III	MIDDLE KINGDOM
2100	IV					
2000						
1900			MIDDLE HELLADIC	MIDDLE CYCLADIC	MIDDLE MINOAN	
1800	VI					
1700						
1600			LATE HELLADIC	LATE CYCLADIC	LATE MINOAN	NEW KINGDOM
1500						
1400						
1300	VII					
1200						

Chronological table.

Lemnos. ▷

Poliochni, aerial photograph from the east. ▷





The stele of Kaminia (6th century BC).



The hill of Poliochni viewed from the north.

Excavations in Poliochni

The demolition of a small church near Kaminia, on the eastern side of the island, brought to light, incorporated into one of its walls, a stone stele with inscribed signs, currently in the National Museum of Athens. This discovery was made known in 1905.

Alessandro Della Seta, director of the Italian Archaeological School since 1919, became greatly interested in the stele and its signs, which resembled those known from Etruscan inscriptions frequently discovered in Italy.

In 1925, the Italian archaeologist

* Terms marked in bold print are annotated in the Glossary.







Archaeologists and workmen pose shortly after the discovery of the first section of the walls of Poliochni (1934).

commenced his investigation of the island and, in the meantime, he began to excavate the already known city of Hephaisteia, the dwelling, according to myth, of Hephaestus, the god of fire. On August 21, 1930, Poliochni was located at a distance of 4 kilometres from Kaminia, near the area where the inscription had been discovered.

The test trenches opened at that time were soon extended into systematic excavations that lasted from 1931 to 1936 and brought to light approximately two thirds of the **settlement**. Nevertheless, no inscription of the type expected by archaeologists was discovered. In reality it was impossible to find such an inscription, as life in Poliochni had begun much earlier than the time when, according to Herodotus, the **Tyrrhenians** set out from the Asiatic coast and, possibly passing through Lemnos, arrived at the Tyrrhenian coast of the Italian peninsula. This was certainly not realised at that time, when knowledge regarding the archaeology of the Aegean was still very hazy. The excavations ceased with the removal of Della Seta from his post in the Archaeological Service –the result of racist decrees issued by the fascist regime in 1938. Research was resumed in 1951 by Luigi Bernabò Brea, who had been trained at the Italian Archaeological School at Athens and had participated in the

excavations of Poliochni since 1936. In the interim he had become the greatest authority on prehistoric archaeology in Italy.

In 1986, Antonino Di Vita, director of the Italian School at the time, developed, with the permission of the Greek authorities, a program of work at Poliochni, which focused primarily on the restoration of the buildings and the southern wall that had suffered extensive damage during World War II.

In addition to the restoration, new excavations began. They were undertaken by Santo Tiné and aimed at identifying the actual function of the walls that surrounded the settlement. Originally it was believed that the walls had been built for defensive purposes. Nevertheless, the new excavations indicated that the walls were not originally meant for the protection of the settlement, although they acquired a defensive character later on (**Red period**).

The investigation of the area, that was temporarily stopped in order to permit the publication of the results of the recent excavations and the completion of the restoration works at the site, will resume shortly, according to the plan prepared jointly by the local Archaeological Ephorate and the new director of the Italian Archaeological School, Mr. Emanuele Greco.

The excavation of 1936. The southwestern section of the walls. ▷

The same section today, after the restoration of 1989. ▷

The northwestern section of the walls viewed from the north. ▷





Historical outline

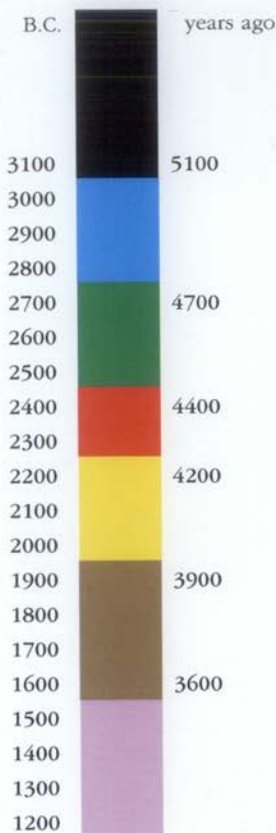
Around 4500 BC a group of people originating from the Asia Minor coast settled on the hill of Poliochni, at the mouth of the river *Avlaki* that watered the nearby fertile plain and made it suitable for *cultivation*.

A village consisting of circular huts, with walls made of wood and reeds resting on a stone foundation, was built on the middle of the hill. Life in this settlement continued for several centuries. A thick layer of debris associated with the settlement contains approximately 16 layers, belonging to distinct habitation phases (*Black period*).

At the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third millennium BC the settlement expanded, covering nearly the entire surface of the hill. Strong retaining walls and public buildings were erected, roads were paved and houses became rectangular in shape.

All these works presuppose planning and, thus, some kind of *social organisation*—elements that are necessary in a society advancing towards a rudimentary form of *urbanisation*.

Already at this time Poliochni may be characterised as a small town, located at the end of the civilised world of the Near East and, at the same time, at the end of Europe, where the concentration of the popu-

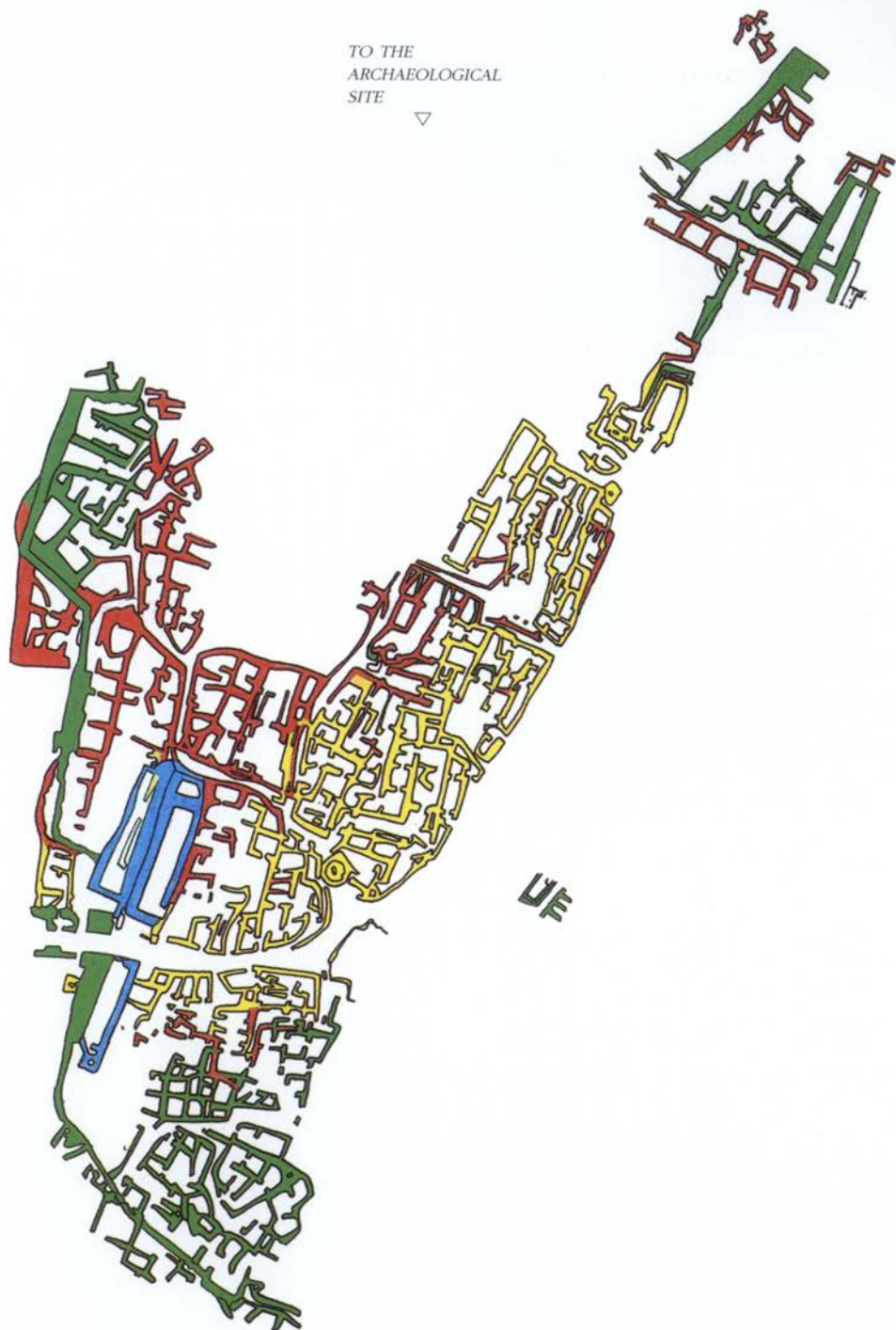


lation in towns was an unknown phenomenon, and would remain so for a long time.

Archaeologists call this phase of the early settlement as the *Blue period*. They also name the successive architectural phases of the settlement, at times expanding or contracting, as the *Green, Red* and *Yellow periods*.

Plan of Poliochni. The various phases of the settlement are indicated in colour.

TO THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SITE



Towards the end of the third millennium, Poliochni is almost completely deserted, following the most destructive of all earthquakes that left their marks on its buildings.

In the second millennium BC, when **Troy** was at the peak of its political and military growth, Poliochni was a small village with a few houses surrounding its two squares and two wells. The settlement may have owed its survival to water: it is likely that it was a stopover for seafarers who crossed the Aegean on their way to the coasts of the Black Sea, rich in metal sources.

Literary sources inform us that **Jason** and his 50 **Argonauts** stayed on Lemnos for two months, waiting for a favourable wind that would allow them to cross the dangerous straits of the Hellespont and the sea of the Propontis and to reach the Black Sea, where they would find the **Golden Fleece**.

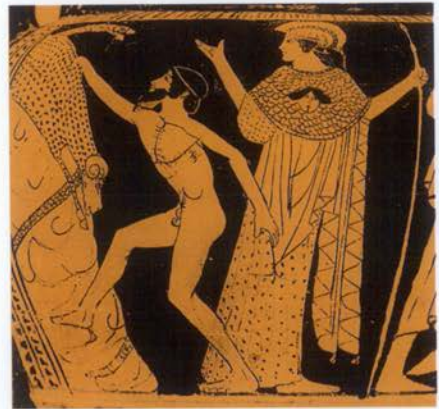
According to Homer, the Greek fleet stopped at the island on its way to Troy and abandoned there **Pbiloctetes**, who was suffering from gangrene. Despite his illness, the hero managed to survive there for ten years (possibly treating his wounds with the miraculous **Lemnian earth**). In the end, **Odysseus** brought him to Troy, where he killed Paris with his arrows, bringing the war to an end, as the oracle had foreseen.

Could Poliochni, no longer a town but now an anchorage, peaceful

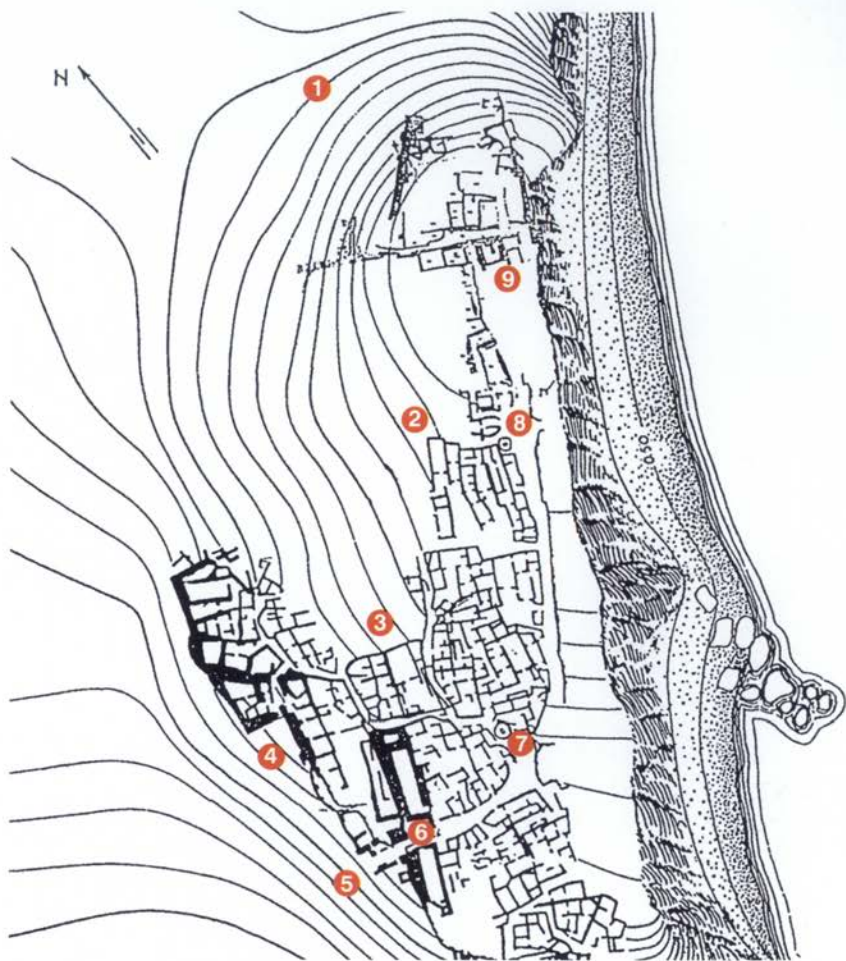
and rich in water, have offered shelter to some of those mythical personages?



Image of a boat on a pan-shaped Cycladic vase.



*Jason and the Golden Fleece.
Scene from an Attic Red-figure vase
(470-460 BC).*



The visit of Poliochni

For the visitor of the archaeological site nine points have been selected, where one may stop and observe the main architectural remains of the settlement.

1. Entrance to the archaeological site.
- 2, 3. Beginning of the tour.
4. Beyond the small staircase.
- 5, 6. Paved ramp.
7. The area of the circular well.
8. Temple.
9. Northern port.



The excavation of the northern area. On the opposite page, the same area during the excavations of 1931-1932.



POINT 1

FIFTY METRES TO THE LEFT OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The walls and fortifications
of the northern side

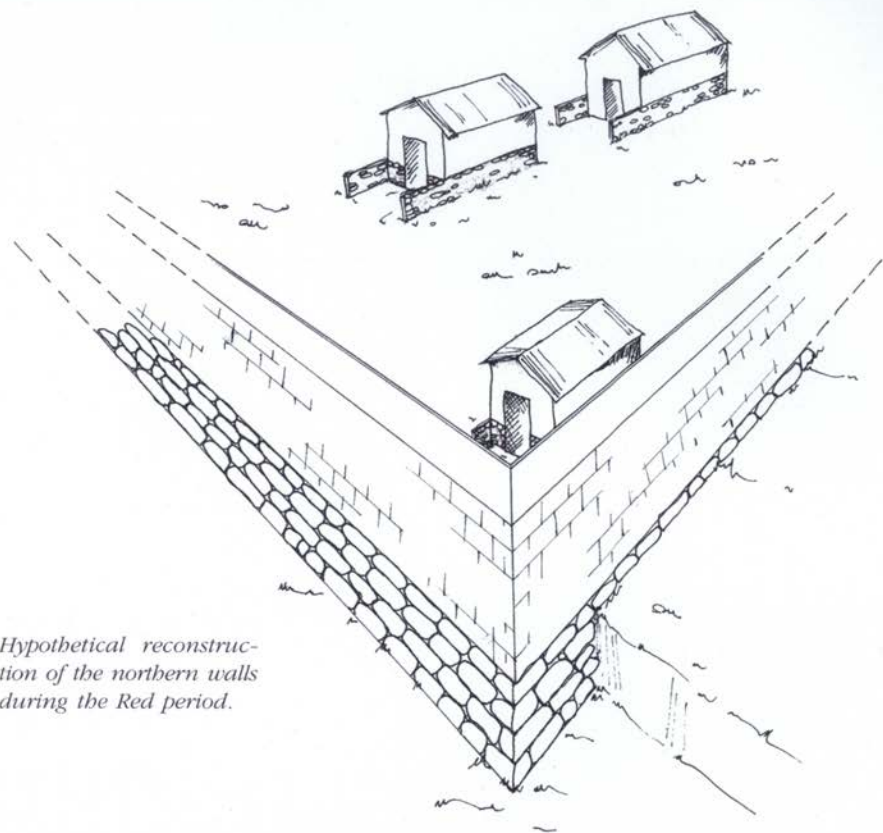
Upon entering the archaeological site, before reaching the top of the hill that provides a view of the extensive area excavated in the 1930's, it is worth taking a look at the remains of a wall that encircled the **settlement** and may have been part of a fortification.

The remains belong to a strong retaining wall, built in order to support the plateau on which the set-

tlement expanded towards the north. However, they could also be the foundation of a wall with **mud-brick** superstructure, that reached a height of three to four metres.

It is believed that the wall was built during one of the last phases of the settlement (Red period), when defensive measures were taken for the first time throughout the Aegean, in order to face enemy attacks.

Very few traces of this wall have been preserved: some large foundation blocks on which rested a few stones, most of which collapsed after the end of the excavation.



Hypothetical reconstruction of the northern walls during the Red period.



POINT 2

BEGINNING OF THE VISITOR'S ROUTE, BEFORE
THE LITTLE HOUSE

The city of the Yellow period

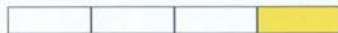
Reaching the top of the hill we have a view of the entire excavated area that occupies approximately 20000 out of the 30000 square metres covered by the settlement at the time of its greatest expansion.

A great part of the visible remains, among them the megaron that is located immediately before us, belongs to the last phase of the settlement (Yellow period, 2200-2100 BC).

The so-called "little house" of the excavation and the archaeological site around it, in a photograph of the 1930's. On the opposite page, the same area today.

Underneath these remains is a dense cluster of houses belonging to earlier building phases of Poliochni. Below the city of the Yellow period, at a greater depth, lie the remains of the city of the Red period (2400-2200 BC), the Green period (2700-2400 BC) and, finally, the Blue period (3200-2700 BC).

The earliest town partially overlaps the village with circular huts, which represents the first phase of human habitation on the hill (Black period, 3700-3200 BC).







Panoramic view of the excavation from the south.



Panoramic view of the excavation from the northeast.





View of the excavation from the north, showing the large megaron (832) of the Red period.



POINT 3

APPROXIMATELY 50 METRES AWAY FROM THE LITTLE HOUSE, TO THE LEFT OF THE PATH

The great megaron

This is the largest known house of the Red period in Poliochni. Excavations inside it brought to light remains of houses belonging to all earlier phases of the city (Green, Blue and Black periods), going back to the circular huts of the primitive village of the Black period.

This megaron (832*) was rebuilt at least three times and was so large (10.10 × 7.90) that it necessitated a strong post at its center to support the roof.

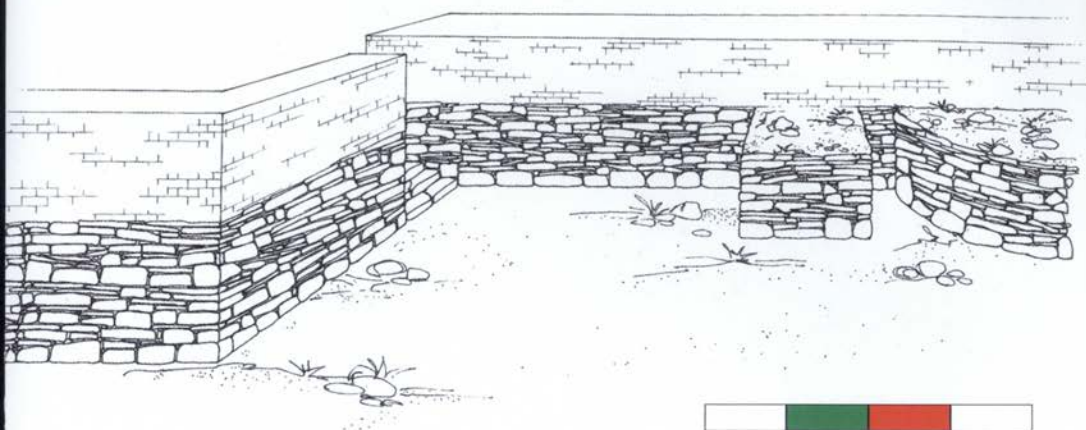
It served as the residence of an important individual, possibly the **ruler** of Poliochni, whose bronze weapons (spears, swords) were discovered in a nearby room.

* The number in parenthesis corresponds to the characterisation of the buildings by Bernabò Brea.





Spearheads and axes of the Red period.



Hypothetical reconstruction of the fortifications of the western side.

POINT 4

BEYOND THE SMALL STAIRCASE LEADING OUTSIDE THE SETTLEMENT

The western quarter of the settlement of the Green period

You are now outside the city and can see the walls that, from the Green period on, encircled its western side. The walls bear traces of numerous additions and repairs, already from the Red period. It is also possible that at that time a higher section made of mudbrick was built over this wall for defensive purposes, as was the case with the northern wall (cf. Point 1).

On the contrary, the **settlement** of the Green period apparently did not face such a need and was able to expand into all possible directions

(to the north and west, even to the south), with some houses extending beyond the retaining walls of the Blue period and occupying the plain towards the river Avlaki.

This was the time of the greatest economic development of Poliochni, which followed a demographic explosion and created the need to expand into new areas for the building of new houses.

This was achieved by the construction of strong retaining walls, even beyond the northern tip of the hill. From an architectural point of view, these retaining works were even bolder than those that were undertaken at the southern part of the settlement in the earlier, Blue period (cf. Point 9).

*The imposing circular bastion of the Red period.
Behind it lies the western entrance to the settlement.*

The western entrance to the settlement.





POINT 5

BEFORE THE UPHILL PAVING

The main gate and the settlement
in the Blue period

This was the main entrance to the settlement. Its remains date to all phases, from the Blue to the Yellow periods.

In reality, in the latter period the city was limited to the highest part of the hill. However, its inhabitants continued to use this gate, to which

they arrived after following the well-built **paved ramp**, constructed in the Green period.

In the Red period, this gate was reinforced by the erection of "Propylaia." With this addition the entrance became narrower, and its defense was easier and more effective.

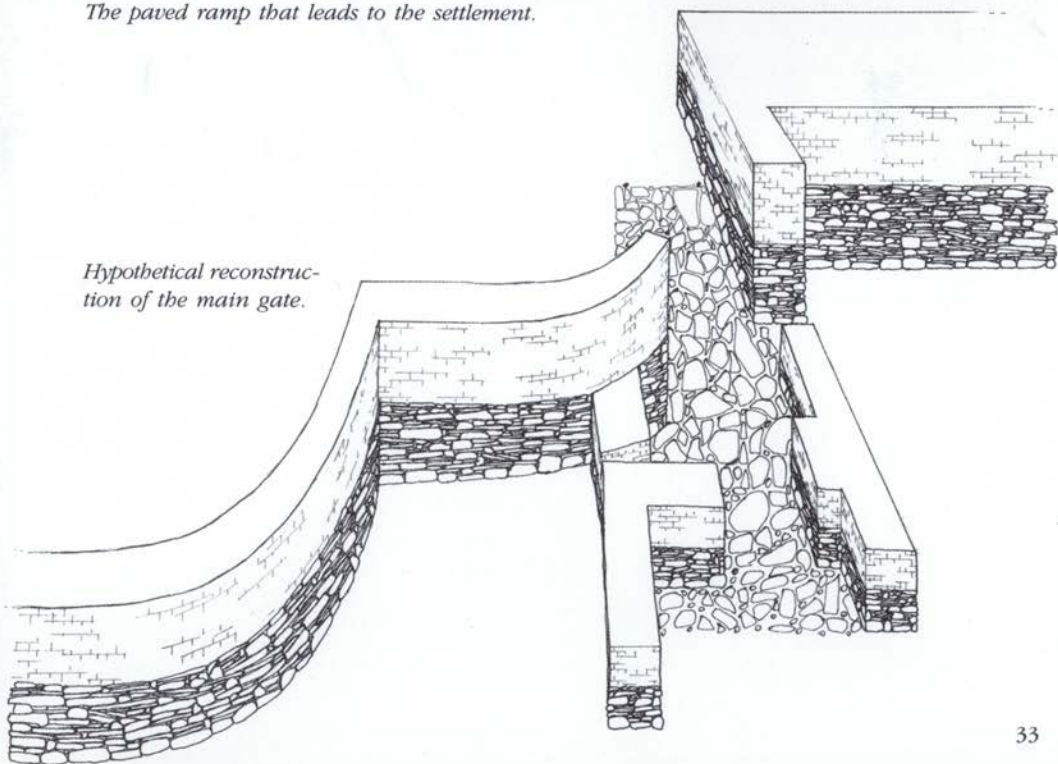
From the top of the uphill paving one sees, at left and right, the two most important buildings of Poliochni: the Bouleuterion and the Granary.

View of the western fortification wall near the uphill paving that leads to the settlement.





The paved ramp that leads to the settlement.



*Hypothetical reconstruction
of the main gate.*

*The beginning of the paved ramp
after the restoration of 1988.* ▷

Small lead pendant found on the paved ramp (Yellow period). It represents a lion to left, supported on its forelegs, with its hind legs bent. The animal's mouth is open. A thin band at bottom indicates the ground. A loop at the back served for its suspension. This is a work of particular interest and may have been imported from the East. It is now kept in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, along with the treasure of Poliochni.



The paved street during the excavations of 1933.





POINT 6

AT THE TOP OF THE UPHILL PAVING

The Bouleuterion, the Granary
and the south wall

The so-called **Bouleuterion**, now on our right, is certainly the most important and impressive public building of Poliochni.

The existence of steps on its western and eastern sides, which were discovered recently underneath a later wall, corroborates its identification

by the early excavators as an area for public gatherings.

It is estimated that it could house approximately fifty people, probably the elders of the settlement, who represented an equal number of nuclear families.

This building, like its equivalent to the north which is equally spacious and has been identified as the **Granary** of the settlement, abuts the impressive walls that were built

The Granary viewed from the south.



during the Blue period and bound the settlement at the south.

The western wall of the Bouleuterion continues to the south, where in some areas it is preserved to a height greater than 4 metres. It stops at the edge of the cliff.

This section is the most impressive of wall remains in the city of Poliochni. It was originally identified as part of a fortification, and Poliochni was

considered the earliest fortified site in the Aegean, even earlier than Troy.

However, later excavations indicated that this wall did not belong to a fortification. It was rather a strong **retaining wall** on the slope of the hill, necessitated by the frequent landslides of the ground on which the settlement continued to expand.

Detail of the Granary that was excavated in the 1930's and was investigated anew in 1955.

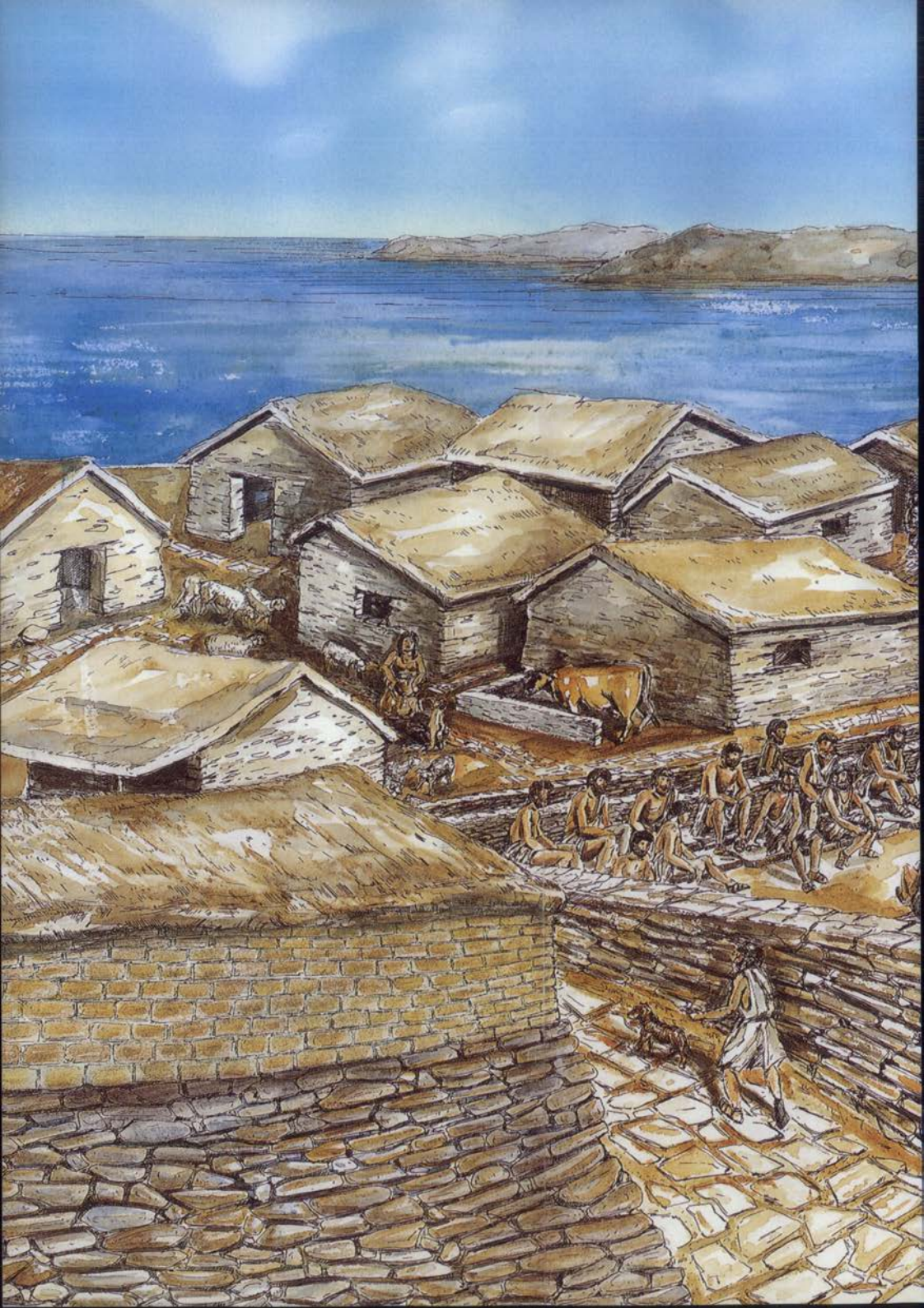


The Bouleuterion viewed from the north. ▷

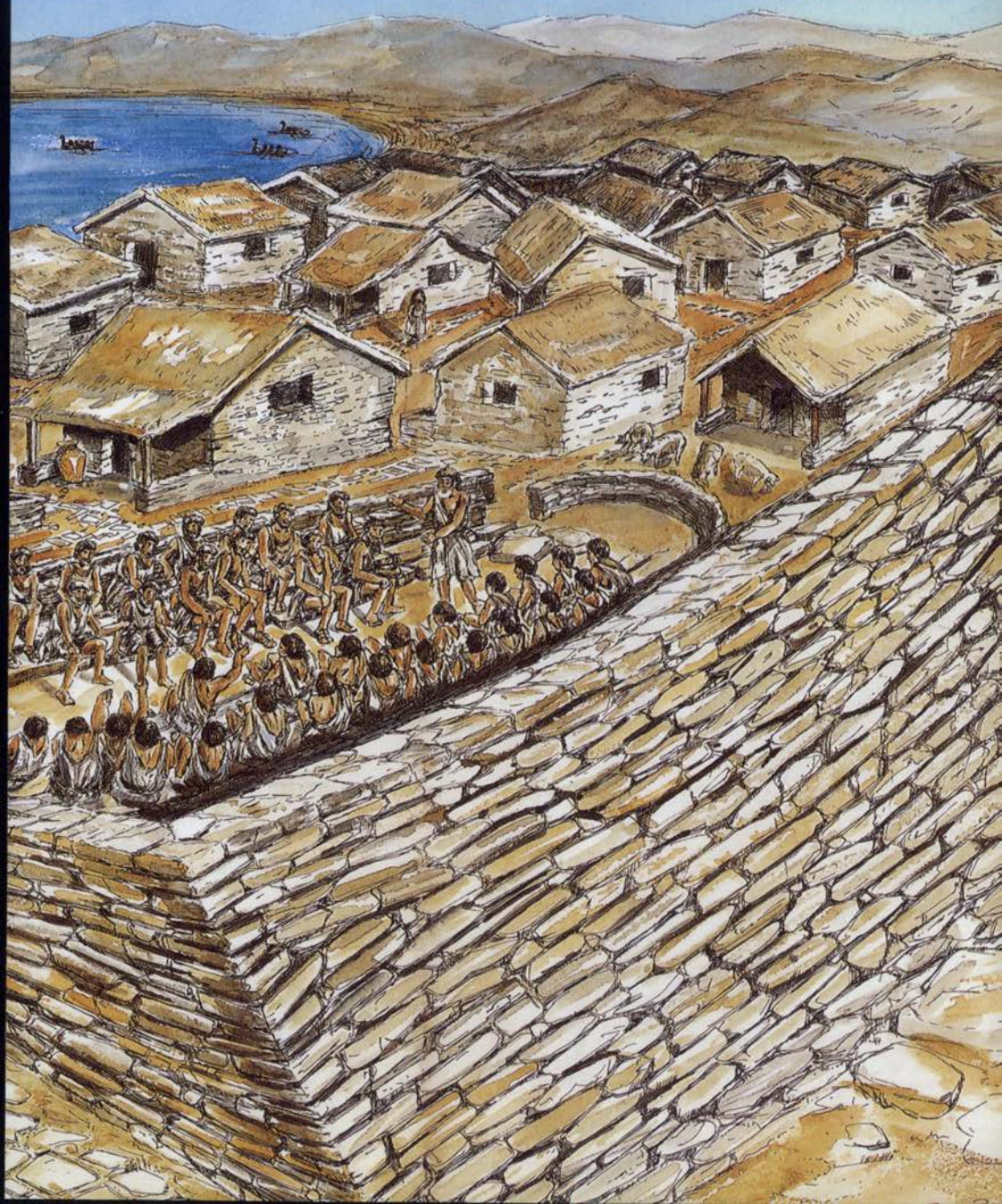


Reconstruction of the Bouleuterion.





Hypothetical reconstruction of the citadel. In the foreground the so-called Bouleuterion and the paved ramp.



POINT 7

NEAR THE CIRCULAR WELL

The road, the square and the "ruler's dwelling"

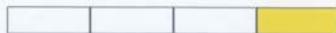
From the paved ramp begins the main street that crosses the entire settlement, passing between the Bouleuterion and the Granary and following a south-north direction. To this street lead the numerous winding

lanes that connected the various small districts and houses of Poliochni.

The best-known road network is that of the city of the Yellow period, which apparently was not very different from those of the previous phases, at least from the Blue period on, when the city was surrounded by walls.

However, this was not the case for

The kiln and later constructions around it. In the background lies the megaron (605).



Hypothetical reconstruction of the paved public space between the well and the megaron (605). At left the room (643), where the golden objects were discovered.



the public space around the well, which formed the main square of Poliochni already from the Blue period. This would have been an open space occupying over 1000 square metres, fully paved and completely free of buildings. Only after the destructive **earthquake** that levelled the Yellow city and disrupted all forms of power was it built over.

Power was probably exercised by the inhabitant of the megaron (605), which is located at the northern side of the square. He must have been the last **ruler** of Poliochni.

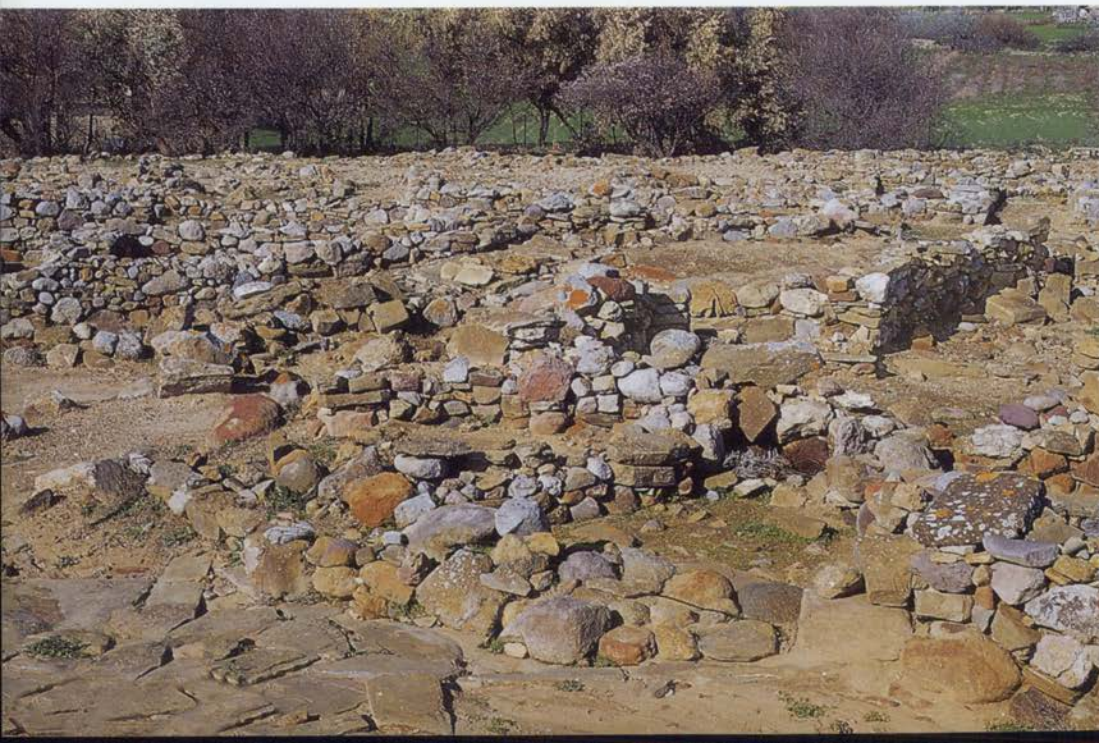
This **megaron** is, indeed, the most important architectural complex of the city in the Yellow period. It had

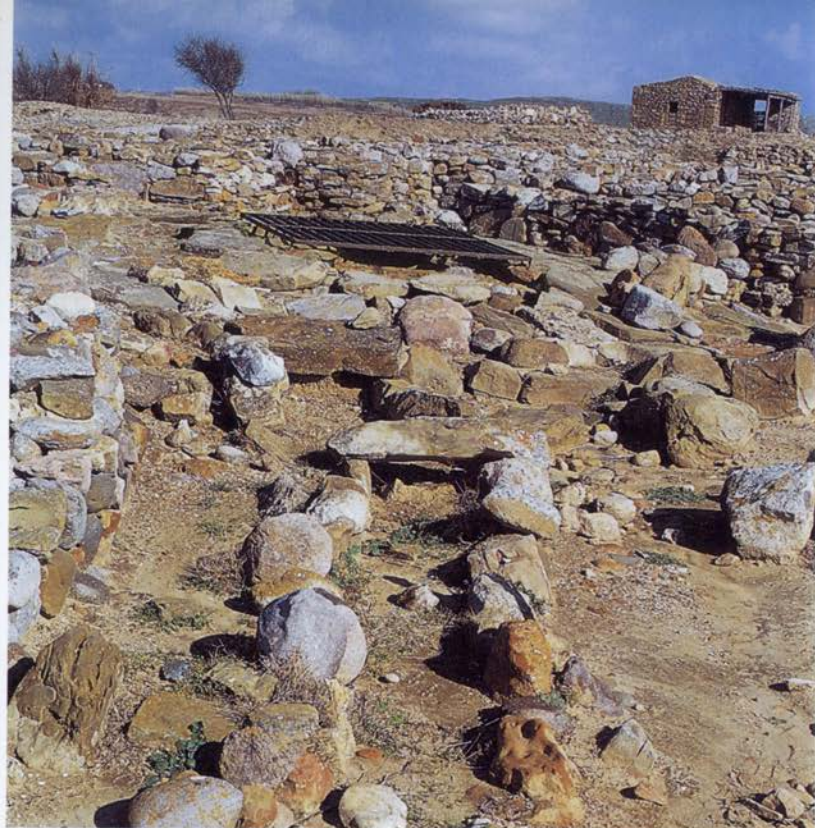
immediate access to the square and ample storage spaces.

However, the most convincing piece of evidence in support of the identification of this building as the dwelling of the chief holder of financial and political power, is the discovery, in a nearby room (643), of the only **treasure** of golden objects that has come to light in Poliochni to the present.

This treasure is not quite as rich as that discovered by Schliemann in Troy –which is erroneously referred to as Priam's Treasure– but it is contemporary to it and contains equally precious objects (fibulae and earrings), possibly coming from the same workshop.

In the foreground the paved area between the well and the megaron (605), where later constructions were built.





At top, the well with the iron protective grill. Below, one of the channels used for draining the rainwater.

At right the main street leading to the square, viewed from the north. In the centre lies the megaron (605).





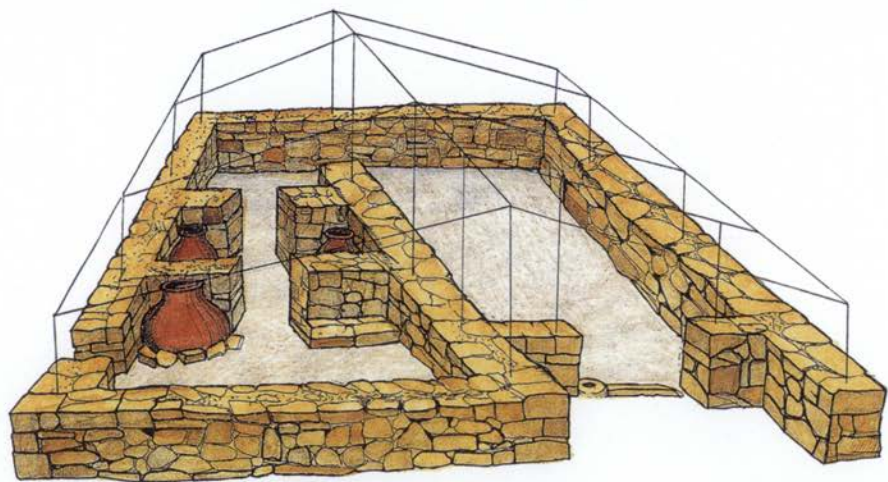
View from the north. In the foreground the deep section of the megaron (605) during the excavation of 1953.

The megaron (605) viewed from the north. To the right, the storage spaces with the large vessels.





The main room of the megaron (605), viewed from the south.



Graphic reconstruction of the megaron (605).

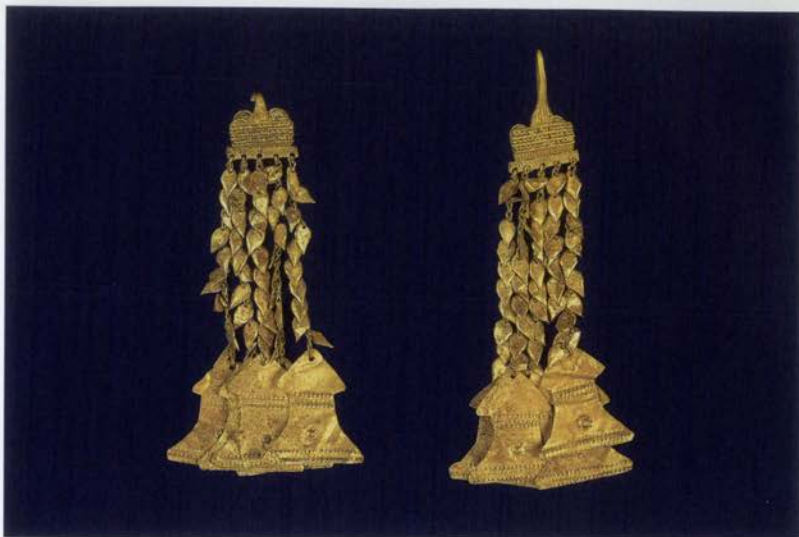


The megaron (605) viewed from the east.



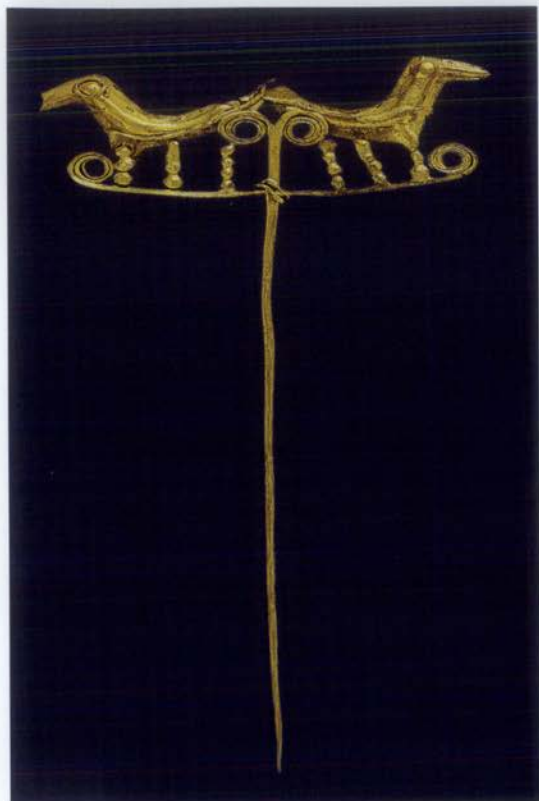
Another manifestation of power: the ivory cylindrical seal that was found in the megaron (605). It is engraved in three superimposed bands and was probably an import from Asia Minor. Today it is kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, along with the golden treasure.

Golden earrings from the treasure of Poliochni (room 643).

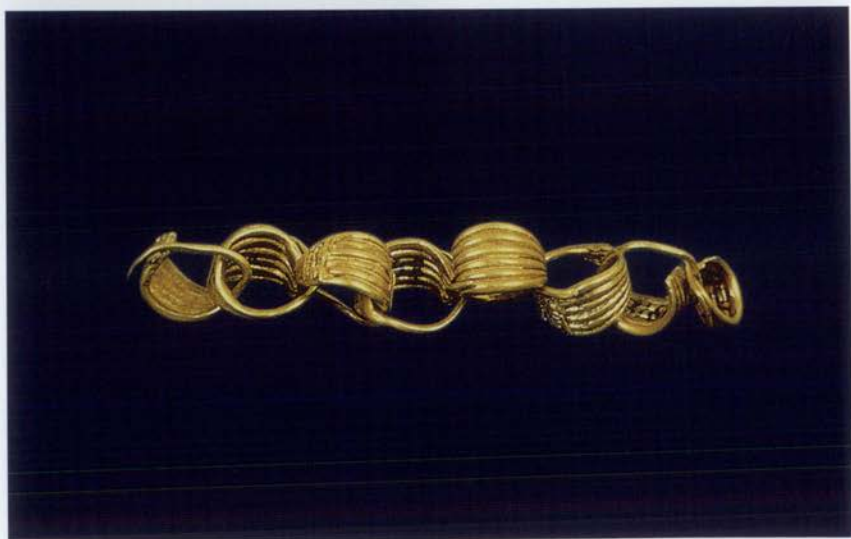


In the foreground the main square with the channel and the well. On the left, an arrow indicates the room (643) where the treasure was discovered.





Golden jewellery, brooch and earrings.



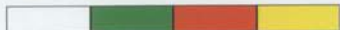


Golden jewellery, necklaces and earrings.





The well with the square shaft on the second square of Poliochni, during the excavation of 1931.



POINT 8

BUILDING BEFORE THE SQUARE WELL

The temple

Following the main street to the north we arrive at the second square of Poliochni. It is smaller than the first one, but it, too, was originally paved and had a public well.

This well has a square shaft and

is deeper than the well with the circular shaft by at least three metres, in order to reach the same water level.

A large megaron located before the well was identified as the “temple” of Poliochni. This identification was prompted by its monumental foundations that are faced by sandstone slabs, its central location on the



The "temple" (megaron 317) viewed from the northeast.

The interior of the "temple" with the two skeletons and vases lying still on the ground (excavations in the 1930's).





The "temple" viewed from the southeast, after the restoration of the 1990's.

square, its relative isolation from nearby buildings and its consistent orientation from the Green to the Yellow periods. However, none of the finds discovered within the building can be associated with a **cult**, or have had a function different from that of the objects found in other buildings at Poliochni.

If this is indeed the "temple" of Poliochni, the two human skeletons that were discovered below its lintel, which collapsed during the earthquake that destroyed the city of the Yellow period, could be taken as evidence for the final sacrifice of the few who delayed in order to pray for the salvation of their fellow citizens.

Top: The "temple" viewed from the northwest. In the foreground lie the foundations of buildings that existed prior to the Green and Red periods. Bottom: The temple viewed from the southeast (during the restoration). ▷



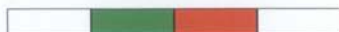
POINT 9

NORTHERN AREA, BEYOND THE "TEMPLE"

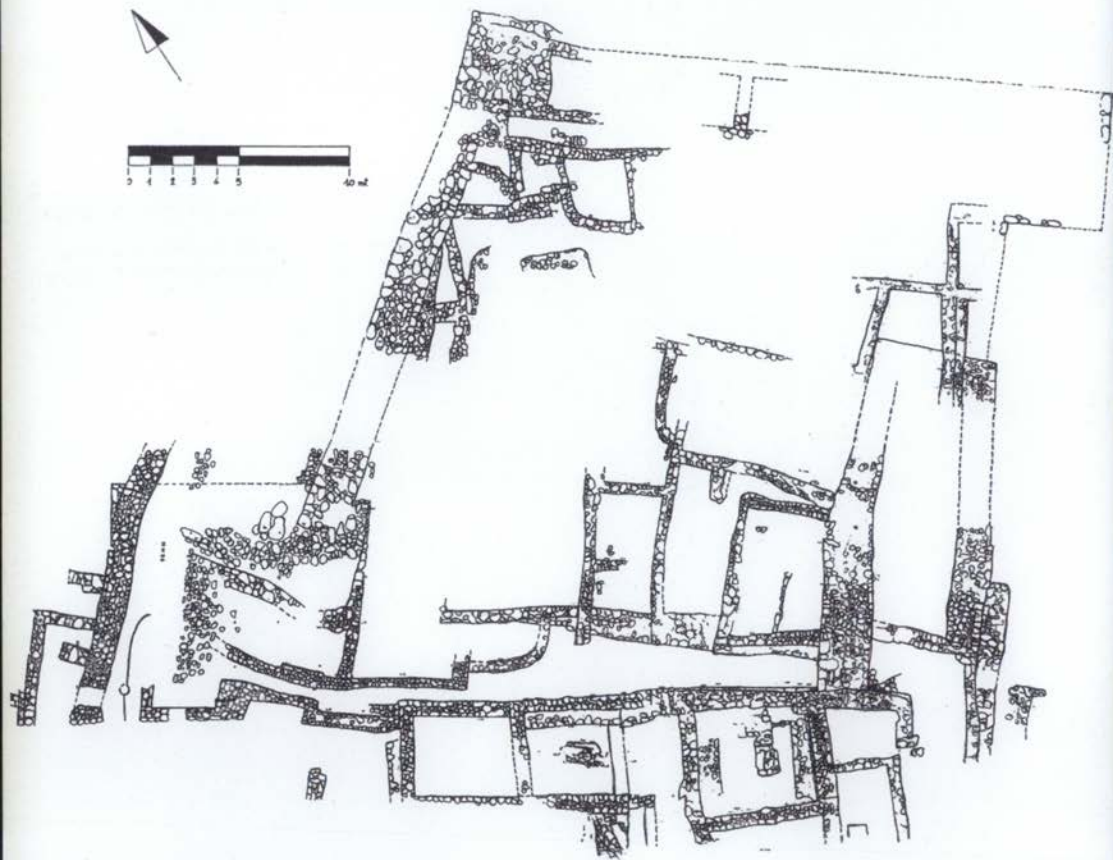
Excavations in the years 1994-95 and 1997 focused on this area. Here came to light impressive walls that aimed at the creation of a plateau for the expansion of the settlement – similar and possibly contemporary to those on the southwestern side

(Green period). As this area is prominent at the site (it is situated 16 metres above sea level) and is also the location of the "temple" (cf. Point 8), it has always been thought that the ruler's settlement could also have been located here.

A very large edifice with a central post and benches along the walls,



Plan of the excavations of the 1990's in the northern area, beyond the "temple".



on which large vessels were placed, could indeed have been the “ruler’s dwelling” from the Green to the Red period. In the latter period the floor level was raised three times, following the rebuilding and repairs necessitated by the demolition of walls during earthquakes. As on the southwestern walls, here, too, there is no clear evidence that above the retaining works rose, already from the Green period, walls made of *mudbrick*, meant for the defense of the settlement.

It is more likely that a similar construction existed along the north-western side, where only one piece of mudbrick was discovered. This area has already yielded traces of mudbrick, or pieces of sun-dried mud. It dates after the middle of the third millennium BC, and at this time there is irrefutable evidence for the existence of fortified citadels in the Aegean and elsewhere.

The large room with the central post and the benches at its sides.





The interior of the large room at the level of the 1995 excavation.



Life in Poliochni

The findings of the excavations, particularly those of the 1930's, 1950's and 1990's, yield enough information about the life of the inhabitants of Poliochni during the various phases of the settlement.

Black period: 3700-3200 BC

Layers corresponding to this period have come to light only in few places. They contain remains of walls suggesting that the houses had a curved outline (round or elliptical in shape) covering a habitable area measuring approximately 20 square metres.

These houses were occupied by nuclear families composed of five to six members who owned domesticated animals (cattle, sheep and pigs) and were primarily involved in the cultivation of the land. The vases used in this period were generally undecorated. Some of them bore painted decoration executed with white colour on a dark background – a style indicating that their makers originated from Asia Minor, where this type of ceramics was very popular.

The limited area occupied by this village suggests that the number of its inhabitants did not exceed a few hundreds.

Blue period: 3200-2700 BC

The houses were rectangular and possibly already belonged to the type of the *megaron*. Their habitable area could house complex families con-

sisting of 16 to 20 individuals connected by blood ties and having a common ancestor.

The settlement spanned the entire promontory. Late in this period the inhabitants built on the southwestern side retaining walls that bounded the area of the settlement.

The population measured approximately 800 to 1000 people (cf. *demographics*). Their main occupation was the cultivation of the land, whereas fishing in the bay and collecting shells from the brackish waters at the mouth of the river Avlaki were also practiced. Among the finds of this period are seashells. Apparently the inhabitants of Poliochni ate the contents and then used the shells as binding material in the mudbrick used in wall construction.

Animal husbandry, especially the raising of sheep, cattle and pigs, was another important facet of economic activity. The surviving food remains provide some evidence for the animals, but exclude the possibility of the existence of large flocks. There were few animals, sufficient to meet the needs of the family – approximately as many as those owned by the few families inhabiting the island today: a couple of cows, 10-15 sheep, a couple of pigs (cf. *animal husbandry*).

The animals provided sufficient food and permitted the exchange of

any surplus with a metal tool or a luxury clay vase in the shape of a boat, like those that were popular on the Greek mainland, where they were manufactured.

Among the imports were also some amphoras of unknown content, possibly wine or olive oil.

What products did the inhabitants of Poliochni exchange with these imports? Possibly hospitality, fresh food and water, provided to travellers who were forced to spend the night on the island, as Jason did (cf. p. 74) before embarking on the dangerous voyage through the Propontis.

In any case, the millstones and scrapers made of basalt—a volcanic material found in abundance on the island—that were discovered in large quantities in the excavations, could hardly have met local needs alone. The millstones were probably exchanged, as is indicated by their perfect condition that suggests they were made for sale.

Green period: 2700-2400 BC

What was noted regarding the economic activity of the inhabitants of Poliochni in the Blue period must be true for the Green period as well.

We know that during this period the settlement experienced its greatest expansion with the creation of two new districts, one to the west and another close to the northern tip.

This development was probably due to a demographic expansion,

during which the population of the island reached approximately 1500 people. The new areas that were occupied necessitated the construction of terracing and the building of new strong walls to support the earth fill, requiring a great amount of labor.

This undertaking may seem disproportionately ambitious in comparison to the benefit stemming from the expansion of the habitable space of the settlement by a few hundred square metres. However, it is not so if we consider the attachment of the inhabitants of Poliochni to this site, despite its geological instability and its exposure to frequent floods resulting from the overflow of the river Avlaki.

There is no specific evidence to exclude the possibility that another wall, intended to protect the settlement from a military attack, was built over the old and new retaining walls. But the available data lead us to discount this possibility, since none of the metal objects discovered may be considered as weapons dating from this phase of the settlement's life.

Red period: 2400-2200 BC

The weapons dating from this period are numerous: a cavity full of spearheads and axes was discovered below the floor of a room near a large megaron (cf. Point 4), which, if it was not the ruler's dwelling, it certainly belonged to a powerful warrior.

The stone axes with a hole for the

fastening of the handle, which on the basis of their shape are termed "hammer axes" or "battle axes", are numerous. In Poliochni their number is so great that they cannot be taken to be tools for metalworking, as it has been suggested.

In this period, the fortification walls present features common in fortified citadels on other Aegean islands. They are clearly raised above the level of the houses they protect, and have stone foundations and mudbrick superstructure.

Even the main entrance to the settlement undergoes important changes, aimed at the improvement of the defense in case of an attack. As in Troy, over the paving they erected posts that supported a wooden gate and limited the space of the entrance, making it more controllable.

Apparently the economic activity did not change significantly, except for the intensification of spinning and weaving with the use of animal (wool) and plant (linen) fibres. This intensification is suggested by the increase in the number of loom-weights in comparison to those found in deeper layers (cf. *industry*).

Commercial transactions probably became more intense after the establishment of metal as an indispensable material for the making of weapons, which were possibly made locally. A clay mould that was discovered may have been used for the

making of a type of axe that was also found in Poliochni (cf. *metallurgy*).

The expanse of the settlement was apparently limited, occupying only the northern part of the central section of the hill. The southern buttress and the line of the earlier walls were abandoned. However, no traces of a new fortification wall exist on this side. Possibly this wall, too, was made of mudbrick, like that on the northeastern side, and thus escaped the attention of excavators in the 1930's.

Yellow period: 2200-2100 BC

The shrinkage of the settlement continues. It is now limited to a zone along the street leading from the main square (cf. Point 7) to the other square (cf. Point 9).

The only important building at this time faces the north side of the main square (cf. Point 8). It is attributed to the last ruler of Poliochni, who may have been the owner of the only treasure of golden objects that has come to light in Poliochni till now. He possibly hid the treasure after the first tremor of the tremendous earthquake that destroyed the entire settlement ca. 2100 BC.

Some of the survivors returned to live on the earlier remains, and settled around the main square (cf. Point 7). More people continued to come here in the following centuries, until the Medieval period. Poliochni, however, never recovered.

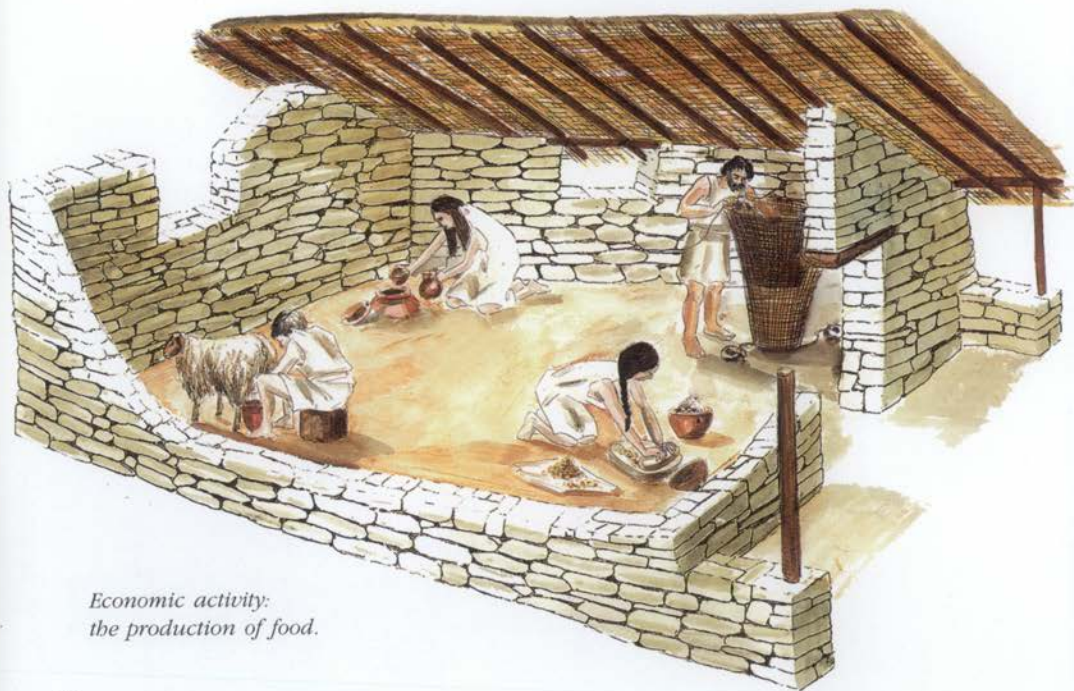
Vases from the various phases of Poliochni.





*Various tools made of clay,
stone, bone and metal.*





*Economic activity:
the production of food.*



Scaling fish.



Making cheese.



Baking a pie.



Slaughtering an animal.



Drawing olive oil or wine from a pithos partially buried in the ground.



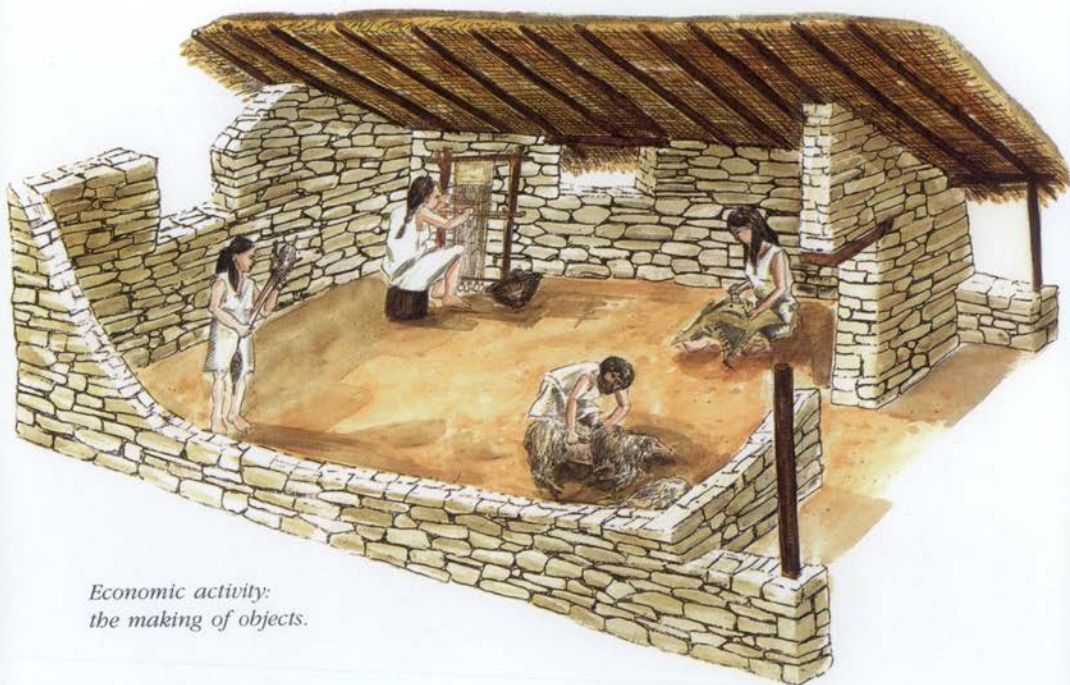
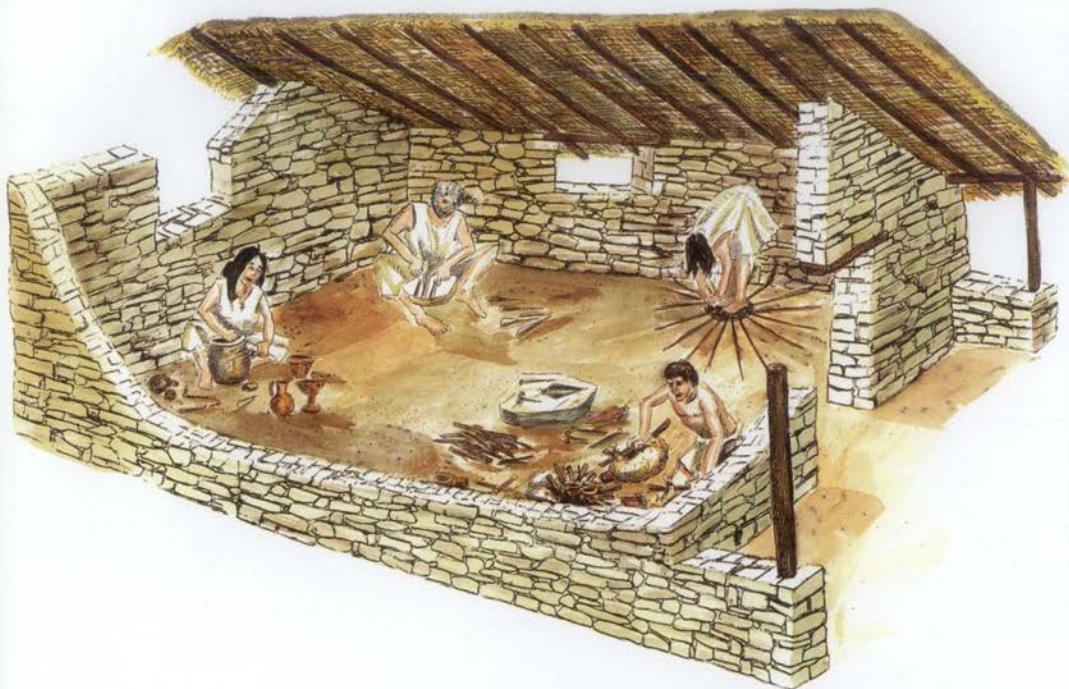
Repairing a fishing net.



Milking sheep.



Milling wheat.



*Economic activity:
the making of objects.*



Processing bone.



Weaving a basket.



Modelling clay vases.



Metalworking.



Weaving on a vertical loom.



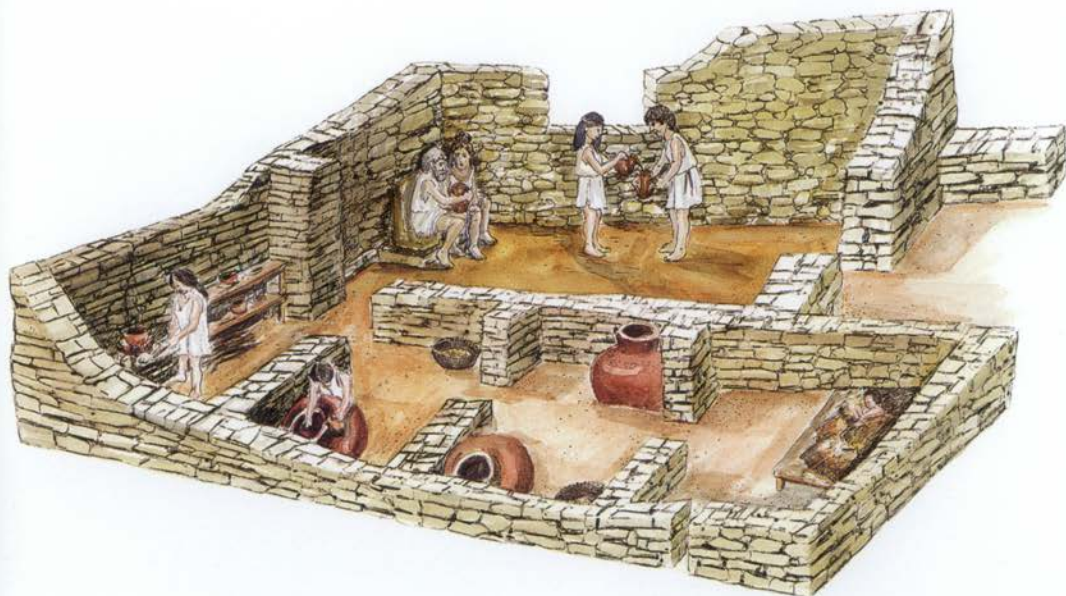
Sewing clothes.



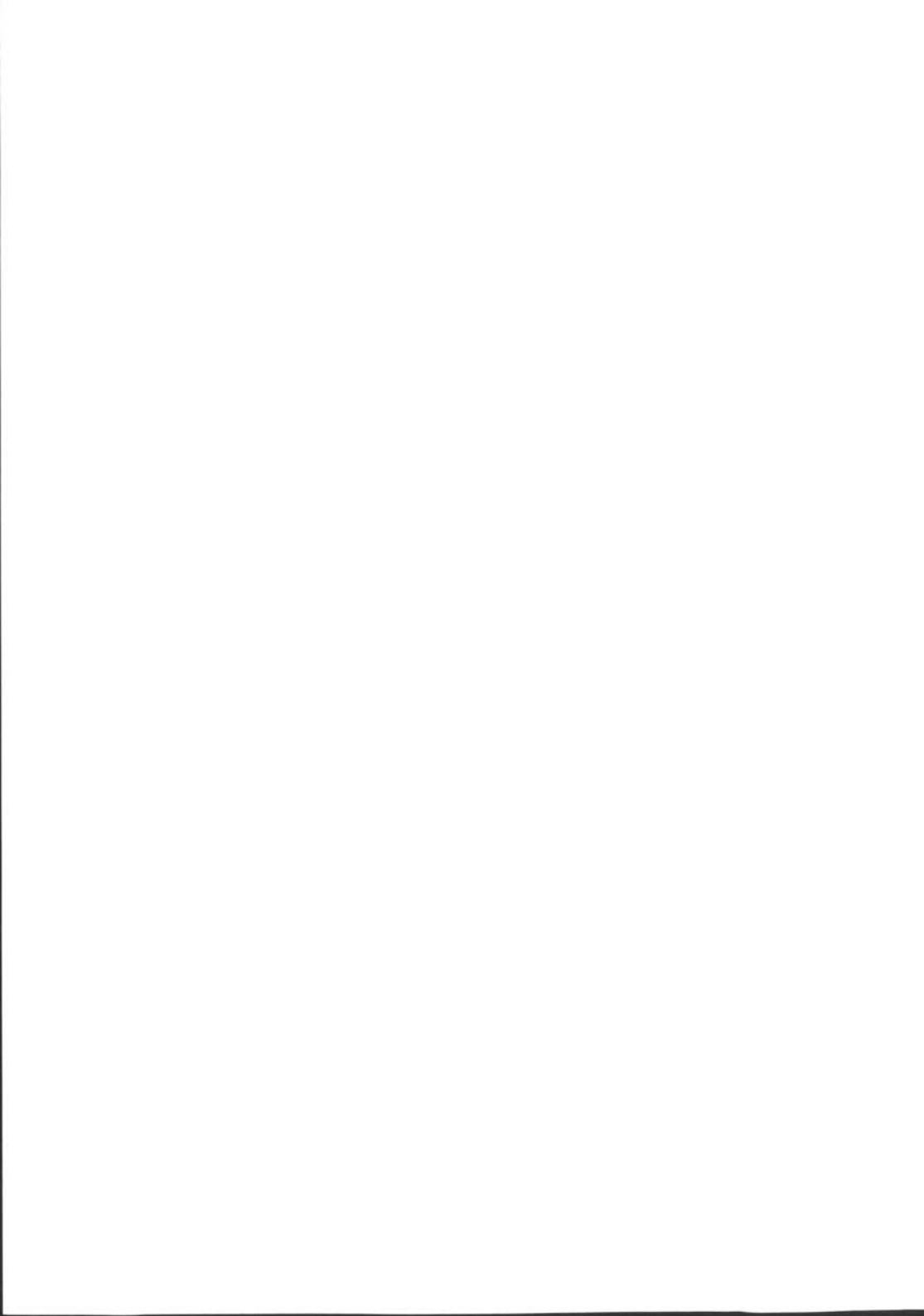
Spinning wool or linen.



Skinning an animal.



GLOSSARY



Animal husbandry: The animal species that are raised in rural communities are sheep and goats, cattle and pigs. They are raised either by and for families, as seems to have been the case in Poliochni, or in flocks tended by shepherds who were solely dedicated to this activity.

Argonauts: At the dawn of history, before the Trojan War (1200 BC) fifty young Greek rulers, among them Herakles, under the leadership of Jason, set out on a dangerous voyage to Colchis, on the coast of the Black Sea, in quest for a mythical goatskin: the Golden Fleece.

This myth reflects the aims of the seafarers of the Aegean and the hardships they faced in order to approach the coasts of the distant, rich in metal, Black Sea.

Avlaki: Today it is a little stream that flows to the south of Poliochni and is nearly dry for several months a year. However, in the third millennium BC it probably had enough water and may even have been dangerous during rainfalls in the fall and winter. It must have formed a frequent threat for the settlement, especially for its southwestern side. The strong retaining walls on this side may have served as a dam for the overflow of the river. Evidence for such periodical overflows comes from the deposits in the plain before Poliochni, which were investigated by drillings and the extraction of cores.

Bouleuterion: A building where the representatives elected by the Greek city-states of the Classical period assembled. In the case of the building at Poliochni this term is not exact, as it hosted the meetings of the elders of the family nuclei rather than the elected representatives of the people.

Cult: In the prehistoric period, the best archaeological evidence regarding cult is provided by the ways in which people honoured their dead, for instance by the architectural type of the grave, the location and orientation of the corpses, or the number and quality of the objects that accompanied the dead to the grave. All these elements are important for identifying the beliefs regarding afterlife, the religiosity of the dead's relatives and their financial situation. Burials also provide evidence regarding the existence of social and economic classes (warriors, nobles, wealthy, poor etc). Nevertheless, since no cemetery has been discovered in Poliochni to date –this is also the case with nearby Troy– we lack information regarding the cult of the dead.

Cultivation of the land: For a very long period of time (Palaeolithic period, 10,000,000 to 10,000 years ago) man lived solely on products yielded by the earth without cultivation, as well as on game. Later on, in the Near East (Palestine, Syria), man began to cultivate certain plants (grains) and to domesticate some

animal species (sheep and cattle). This marks the beginning of the Neolithic period, or the time of the cultivation of the land, when man began to improve his life by exploiting nature. These important innovations were transmitted to Europe, reaching the area of Greece in 6000 BC, with the introduction of grains and sheep which, for many years, formed the basis of the economy. This innovation reached Poliochni ca 4000 BC.

Demographics: Despite the lack of evidence from the cemeteries of Poliochni, that have not come to light yet, it is possible to form certain hypotheses on demographics, at least with respect to the size of the population during the various periods of the settlement's life.

For instance, we may estimate that Poliochni in the Blue period had approximately 800 inhabitants divided into 50 families –as many as the houses that could fit within the fortified settlement. The number of families corresponds to the number of the elders who assembled at the Bouleuterion and decided on communal issues, such as the building and repair of walls, the transmission of water through water channels, as well as the creation and maintenance of communal spaces, like squares and streets. A significant increase in the population, that reached approximately 1500 people, is believed to have taken place during the Green

period. At this time the need for additional building space was pressing, and for this reason retaining walls were built at the border of the early city. The population of Poliochni lived on the cultivation of the land around the river Avlaki, namely of the area that is now located around Kaminia, the modern settlement near Poliochni.

The same number of people –approximately 1000 individuals– formed the population of this community around the middle of the previous century, namely before the beginning of the great migration to Athens and Australia. At that time, the inhabitants of Kaminia lived solely on the products yielded by the cultivation of the same lands in the vicinity of Poliochni.

Deposit: A space, usually at the border of a settlement, where the inhabitants disposed of a great part of their litter. The remaining trash was abandoned on the streets and inside the houses, where archaeologists discover it and use it to extract important information on the life of the settlers. In Poliochni, excavations in the 1930's brought to light a heavily used deposit at the northern limit of the settlement. The gradients along the southern walls, which were created there on purpose, in order to strengthen the walls and prevent their collapse, were also identified as areas for the disposal of litter.

Earthquake: Lemnos is a volcanic

island located at the border of the Euroasian tectonic plaque. It is frequently shaken by destructive earthquakes that have left visible traces on walls of various periods in Poliochni. For instance, some walls have a wavy facade owed to wavy earthquakes, whereas others have collapsed following tectonic earthquakes. The strongest earthquake destroyed the city of the Yellow period; afterwards only part of the inhabitants returned, and the city never recovered.

Fishing: Like the hunt of small mammals with traps or slings etc., fishing was an activity in which farmers were engaged on occasion. It was practiced by the inhabitants of Poliochni –a site that was probably selected by its settlers because, in addition to its other features, it also favored this secondary economic activity.

Golden Fleece: A gilt goatskin. It possibly symbolised a vessel used for collecting specks of gold from the rivers' waters –a type of sieve used by the gold-diggers of the American West.

According to myth, the Golden Fleece was kept in a forest of Colchis, where it was guarded by a dragon. Jason discovered it, but before getting possession of it he was attacked by the dragon and had to ask for Athena's intervention.

Granary: Large rectangular building (17×4 metres) opposite the Bouleuterion. It was interpreted as a public building where the wheat of all the inhabitants of Poliochni was kept. Despite its large size, this building could not have held the 150 tons of grain that were necessary to feed the estimated 800 inhabitants of Poliochni in the Blue period. Moreover, the existence of large vessels for the storage of food in nearly all the houses of Poliochni indicates that each family had its own supplies, and that the community did not store grains jointly. It is possible that this building was only used for storing the wheat that was necessary for sowing– a communal good that had to be protected for the sake of the entire community.

Homer: The renowned poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the former poem he narrates the events of the Trojan War, in the latter the adventurous return of Odysseus to his homeland. He originated from Smyrna and lived in the second half of the 8th century BC. According to tradition, he was poor and blind.

Industry: All activities that produce consumer goods, except for those related to the preparation of food. In the farming community of Poliochni true industrial activity probably began in the Red period, when it is believed that metal objects, among them weapons, were made locally. Earlier

on, metal objects were probably imported, were largely decorative and were certainly used for domestic purposes, for instance in industries manufacturing vases, baskets, weaving fibres, textiles, clothes etc.

Jason: Mythical hero, who, in order to recapture his kingdom that was usurped by his uncle Pelias, set out on an adventurous voyage to Colchis in the Black Sea, in order to get the Golden Fleece. Fifty youthful rulers, among them Herakles, boarded his ship, Argo.

The Argonauts stopped at Lemnos. The island was inhabited solely by women, whom they married. Jason begot two sons from the island's Queen, Hypsipyle. The Argonauts continued their journey and, after facing many dangers, arrived at their destination. There, however, a huge dragon guarding the Golden Fleece swallowed Jason and vomited him. Medea, daughter of the King of Colchis, helped him get the fleece and escape.

Upon his return to his homeland, Jason learned that Pelias had died and had been succeeded by his son Akastos, one of the Argonauts. He settled with Medea in Corinth, where, however, he abandoned her for Queen Kreousa, who was later killed by her rival.

Lemnian earth: Layer of red earth, rich in iron, that abounds in certain

parts of the island. Traces of quarrying that cannot be dated came to light near Kontopouli. The exploitation of Lemnian earth was related to the medicinal, astringent and wound-healing properties ascribed to it.

Megaron: Characteristic type of building in the prehistoric period, consisting of one or two rooms with an open court before them. It appeared in Greece at the end of the fourth millennium BC and remained in use even in the historical period.

Metallurgy: As a craft, it requires special know-how as well as access to raw materials (copper, tin etc). No indication for a metallurgy workshop came to light in Poliochni. Nevertheless, the discovery of a mould for axes that points to the use of the "lost wax" technique for the casting of metal, as well as the unearthing of fragments of a small crucible in the fill of a pit located underneath the "small ruler's dwelling" indicate that there may have been metallurgical activity in Poliochni already from the Green period.

Mortar: When building a wall without binding material, the cohesion of the stones depends largely on the care with which the builder selects and places them one on top of the other. Contrary to this practice, on the walls of Poliochni clay mortar fills all the spaces between the stones and increases their strength,

although not as much as when cement is used.

Mudbrick: The commonest building material in the Near East, Asia Minor and Northern Greece. In Poliochni it was apparently used only for the upper part of fortification walls, when they became necessary for the defense of the settlement. The walls of private houses, which were preserved to a height of 1.80 metres, were not built with mudbrick.

Odysseus: King of Ithaca and Cephalonia. Convinced by Agamemnon to participate in the Trojan War, he took part in the ten-year-long siege of Troy, where he distinguished himself for his bravery and, mostly, for his cunning. He returned to Lemnos in order to bring with him Philoctetes, who, according to the oracle, would kill Paris with his arrows. The participation of Philoctetes in conjunction with the trick of the Trojan Horse, devised by Odysseus, brought an end to the war.

Paris: One of the fifty sons of Priam, the King of Troy. At a beauty contest he favoured Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who, as a reward, promised him that he would conquer the heart of the most beautiful woman – Helen, wife of the Spartan King Menelaus. In the course of the war that broke out he was not distinguished for his bravery. Nevertheless,

with the help of the god Apollo he succeeded in killing Achilles, the most famous of the Greek heroes. A little later he was killed by the arrows of Philoctetes, whom Odysseus brought back from Lemnos, where the Greeks had abandoned him when he suffered gangrene after being bitten by a snake.

Paved ramp: It was used for the ascent to a higher level, formed by the deposit of materials in the inhabited areas. In Poliochni, as in Troy, it was necessary to create an ascent, since in order to reach the level of the houses one had to overcome a difference of 2.60 metres in elevation. This was made possible by the construction of a ramp, eleven metres long, with an inclination of approximately 25%. Compared to that of Troy, the paved ascent of Poliochni is less impressive, because in the Red period it was partially covered by additions that aimed at improving the defense of the settlement.

Period (or chronological phase): A period of time, short or long, that is distinguished by certain distinctive characteristics. The houses follow a particular design, the vases have special shapes and decoration and objects used in everyday life present common features. The modification of one or more of these characteristics speaks for a chronological change and, occasionally, a complete change in a cultural system, with the arrival of other populations in the community.

In Poliochni, the cultural elements of the population appear to be uniform from the Black to the Yellow periods. Changes concern only certain aspects of this homogeneous civilisation. For instance:

1. The replacement of the earlier circular house type by the rectangular one.
2. The appearance of certain new vase shapes (tripod, fruit-stand), or changes in the shape of the foot or handles of the cups.
3. The appearance of vases made of pure clay (Yellow period) in contrast to those made of clay with inclusions (Black to Red periods). These periods are assigned a certain length of time on the basis of comparisons to other, better dated neighbouring civilisations, or on the basis of radiocarbon analysis (C14).
4. The presence or absence of metal objects.

Philoctetes: Thessalian mythical hero, the best archer of the Greek army that sailed to Troy. When his foot suffered gangrene after a snake bite, his comrades abandoned him on Lemnos. He lived there for ten years without finding a cure, until Odysseus picked him up and took him to Troy, where he killed Paris and brought the war to an end.

Retaining wall: The levelling of a reclining surface with the aid of a retaining wall in order to create a

level terrain that will be used either for cultivating the land or for construction.

Ruler (or leader of a small community): The ruler held economic, political, military and, sometimes, even religious power. His power could be hereditary or not, and was not secured solely by old age, but also by worth and strength.

Settlement: An inhabited area of limited extent (20,000-30,000 square metres) that was surrounded by walls –not necessarily defensive– and had a sizeable population. The cohabitation of several family nuclei created various problems that were solved by increasingly complex forms of social and political organisation, governed by rules that were safeguarded by the council of the elders, a leader or a ruler.

Social life: The community of Poliochni was apparently organised in groups composed of 15 to 20 people, related by blood ties and gathered around a common ancestor. They were complex families, not true phyletic groups (clans) consisting of the offspring of a common, distant ancestor who, through the ages, had become legendary.

Concentrated in the same area, these groups lived rather autonomously. Nevertheless, they solved problems arising from their cohabitation through gatherings of their

elders in the Bouleuterion, without delegating this task to a small number of individuals, a chief or a ruler. Thus, it seems that Poliochni, at least in the Blue period, enjoyed a rudimentary form of democracy, which later (apparently from the Red period on) gave its place to the gathering of all power in the hands of one ruler, who was possibly surrounded by a limited number of noble warriors.

Trade: From the earliest Neolithic and, even, from the Palaeolithic period (approximately 20,000 years ago), items precious for their beauty or rarity were traded. Seashells from the Mediterranean were discovered at Palaeolithic sites in central France. Obsidian from Melos was found on the Greek mainland, while obsidian from the Lipari islands and Sardinia was discovered in France and throughout the Italian peninsula.

However, trade in its modern sense, performed by individuals who devoted all their time to the search for location and transportation of raw materials and finished goods, was introduced in the era of metals, especially with the trading of weapons.

It is certain that products of Poliochni were exported from the island; this is confirmed by the frequent discovery of ceramic seals that were used for the identification of merchandise and its owners. Commercial transactions with the Cyclades and the coasts of the Greek mainland

are testified by amphora fragments, sherds with painted decoration and a marble sherd. This is how a cylindrical ivory seal from faraway Mesopotamia reached Poliochni (cf. p. 48).

Treasure: A group of precious objects found together inside a vase, hidden there by their owner, who did not search for them again, because he was prevented by certain events (like his death in an earthquake). Such is apparently the case with the hoard of Poliochni, as well as with that found by Schliemann in Troy.

Troy: Fortified city at the mouth of the river Scamander, controlling the entrance of the straits of the Hellespont. The city was inhabited from the early Bronze Age (from the beginning of the third millennium) and was often destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, it was constantly being rebuilt in the same place until its final destruction by the Greeks under Agamemnon, in 1184 BC. This story is narrated in the *Iliad*. Troy was revived at the time of Alexander the Great and flourished in the years of the Roman occupation, as the Romans considered it their place of origin. The excavations by Schliemann and Dörpfeld in the late nineteenth century brought to light the successive building phases of the city and unearthed treasures of golden objects similar to those of the treasure of Poliochni.

Tyrrhenians: A people that, accord-

ing to Herodotus and Thucydides, moved from the Asia Minor coast westwards, to the so-called Tyrrhenian coast of the Italian peninsula, passing through Lemnos and the Chalcidike peninsula.

Urbanisation: This term denotes the concentration of an increasing number of people in a common area (village or town). The case of Poliochni represents an early form

of urbanisation. We estimate that there existed approximately fifty families of a complex type (their elders assembled at the Bouleuterion), consisting of immediate descendants of a living ancestor (15-20 individuals). They continued to cultivate the nearby farms but did not live there permanently. Instead, they returned to the settlement at night, as is the case with present-day farmers living at Kaminia.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AT ATHENS

When the Greek state was founded in 1830, after the War of Independence, the first governments were immediately faced with the great problems of the economy, public administration and education. The last of these also included the question of the country's ancient treasures, which had been looted and destroyed over the centuries by traffickers in antiquities. However, the official Antiquities Service was undermanned and incapable of taking proper care of the ancient remains, and so on 6th January 1837, on the initiative of a wealthy merchant named Konstantinos Belios, a group of scholars and politicians founded The Archaeological Society at Athens with the object of locating, re-erecting and restoring the antiquities of Greece.

The Presidents and Secretaries of the Society in its early days were politicians and diplomats, whose enthusiasm was such that in spite of the shortage of funds –for it was financed entirely by members' subscriptions and voluntary donations and received no assistance whatever from the State– they were able to carry out a number of ambitious projects such as the excavations of the Acropolis, the restoration of the Parthenon and the Excavation of the Theatre of Dionysos, the Odeion of Herodes Atticus and the Tower of the Winds, all in Athens.

Until 1859 the Society was in such a precarious financial position that it was constantly on the verge of collapse. In that year the distinguished scholar and epigraphist Stephanos Kumanudes became its Secretary, and he held the position until 1894. With his expertise, his methodical mind and his energy he breathed new life into the Society, and on his initiative large-scale excavations were carried out in Athens (Kerameikos, Acropolis, Hadrian's Library, Stoa of Attalos, Theatre of Dionysos, Roman Agora), elsewhere in Attica (Rhamnous, Thorikos, Marathon, Eleusis, Amphiaraeion, Piraeus), and in Boeotia (Chairo-neia, Tanagra, Thespiiai), the Peloponnese (Mycenae, Epidauros, Lakonia) and the Cyclades. Meanwhile the Society founded several large museums in Athens, which were later amalgamated to form the National Archaeological Museum.

Kumanudes was succeeded by Panayiotis Kavvadias, the General Inspector of Antiquities (1895-1909, 1912-1920), who carried on his predecessor's work with undiminished energy and presided over excavations in other parts of Greece –Thessaly, Epiros, Macedonia and the islands (Euboea, Corfu, Kefallinia, Lesbos, Samos and the Cyclades)– as well as the opening of numerous museums in provincial towns. Kavvadias was succeeded by three university professors, Georgios Oikonomos (1924-1951), Anastasios Orlandos (1951-1979) and Georgios Mylonas (1979-1988). Under them the Society managed to keep up

its archaeological activities in spite of the difficulties caused by the Second World War and its aftermath, which hampered its work for a considerable length of time.

As an independent learned society, the Archaeological Society is in a position to assist the State in its work of protecting, improving and studying Greek antiquities. Whenever necessary, it undertakes the management and execution of large projects: this has happened with the excavations in Macedonia and Thrace in recent years and with large-scale restoration projects in the past.

An important part of the Society's work is its publishing. It brings out three annual titles: *Praktika tes Archaialogikes Hetairias* (Proceedings of the Archaeological Society) (since 1837) containing detailed reports on the excavations and researches carried out in all parts of Greece; the *Archaialogike Ephemeris* (since 1837) containing papers on subjects to do with Greek antiquities, including excavation reports; and *Ergon tes Archaialogikes Hetairias* (The Work of the Archaeological Society) (since 1954), published every May, with brief reports on its excavations. *Mentor* is a quarterly whose contents consist mainly of short articles on ancient Greece and the history of Greek archaeology, as well as news of the Society's activities. All these are edited by the Secretary General.

Besides the periodicals, there is the series of books with the general title *The Archaeological Society at Athens Library*: these are monographs on archaeological subjects and reports on excavations, mostly those carried out by the Society.

The Society is administered by an eleven-member Board, elected every three years by the members at a General Meeting. Every year, in May or thereabouts, the Secretary General of the Board reports on the Society's activities over the past twelve months at a Public Meeting.

THE BOOK

POLIOCHNI, THE EARLIEST TOWN IN EUROPE

BY SANTO TINÉ - ANTONELLA TRAVERSO

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