

## NOTES ON SALAMINIAN HARBOURS

*Κατὰ τοῦτό ἐστι Σαλαμίς νῆσος  
καὶ πόλις καὶ λιμὴν.  
SKYLAX*

### Introduction

My contribution<sup>1</sup> to this Third International Symposium on “Ship Construction in Antiquity” aims at giving us the chance to visit some of the ancient harbours of Salamis, land of King Ajax and birthplace of Euripides, an island favoured by Geography to be *εὐλίμενος* (well-harboured), not *δύσορμος ναυσίν*, as the ancient Greeks would have said.

Among the bigger islands of the Saronic Gulf, Salamis, with an area of 93.5 km<sup>2</sup>, lies nearest to Attica. Its fame derives mainly from the great sea-battle that took place in the historic Straits in 480 BC. Yet, that naval battle, however crucial for Greek History, was one of many events in a long and at times turbulent Salaminian history in which ships and seamanship, harbours and sea-communication played a major role.

The nautical tradition is still very much in evidence in Salamis today. A substantial part of the income of many of the modern Salaminians derives from activities associated with the functioning of the *Naustathmos* i.e. the Arsenal of the Greek Fleet in the northeastern part of the island and of a sizeable fleet of fishing boats harboured at Koulouri, the island’s capital; and also with the existence of a series of small and medium-size shipyards and ship-repair units around the Bay of Ambelaki in the eastern part of the island and at Perama on the opposite Attic coast, which is linked to Salamis by ferry.

As its title suggests, my paper is a compilation of working notes and observations on Salaminian harbours made during recent field research for a larger project concerning Prehistoric Salamis with particular reference to its southern part<sup>2</sup>, a project on which I have been fortunate to embark in collaboration with Professor Demetrios I. Pallas, an indefatigable explorer of his native island's past.

I had originally wanted this paper to focus on the Prehistoric Period and examine, in particular, the relation of some prehistoric settlement sites to specific natural harbours in Salamis. Very recent field research, however, has shown it preferable to devote due space to the presentation of the evidence for Salaminian harbours in use in historical times and then move backwards to Salaminian harbours in prehistoric times. To the latter I shall refer only in summary fashion at the end of my communication and reserve for them a full treatment in a second paper in the future.

Let me say at the outset that I am not a harbour archaeologist. Here, I should only like to present to you and briefly comment on the relevant evidence identified in Salamis; I believe, however, that its full interpretation at some later stage will be seen to have a direct bearing on our inquiry into the internal Salaminian history and also on the study of the maritime history of a central part of the Greek World.

### **Ambelaki (Figs. 1-12)**

Before we go to the southern coast of Salamis, let us consider the harbour of the Classical and Hellenistic city of Salamis. This harbour is located in the small bay of Ambelaki in the eastern part of the island (Fig. 4), the plausible point of assembly of the united Greek fleet in 480 BC.

An idea of how the landscape in this part of the island might have looked in Antiquity is given by a water-colour, a view of the village and bay of Ambelaki from west, executed by the German painter Carl Rottmann<sup>3</sup> during his stay in Greece in 1834-1835 (Fig. 2). As in other parts of Salamis and Attica, the landscape has been changing rapidly as is shown by a photograph of the area of Ambelaki taken in 1989 from near where Rottmann was painting (Fig. 3).

Despite its proximity to Athens, this historic ancient harbour is not frequented by visitors today. For a period in recent years it served as a graveyard for ships, while its waters are today among the most polluted in Salamis.

The small bay of Ambelaki is a fine natural harbour, always calm, with its mouth measuring c.450 m. It is well protected from the north winds by the peninsula

of Kamatero or Pounta (the ancient Kolouris, site of historical Salamis), rising to a height of 39 m above the sea, and from the south winds and the waves of the Saronic by the long peninsula of Kynosoura whose highest points rise 60 m and 56 m above sea level (Figs 4, 5).

The inner bay of Ambelaki served as the harbour of Classical and Hellenistic Salamis, the city that emerged as the capital of the island following its annexation to Athens shortly after 600 BC. In Strabo's words "the city of to-day is situated on a gulf, on a peninsula-like place which borders on Attica" (... τὴν δὲ νῦν ἐν κόλπῳ κειμένην ἐπὶ χερρονησοειδοῦς τόπου συνάπτοντος πρὸς τὴν Ἀττικὴν)<sup>4</sup>.

Parts of the city of Salamis including a fortification wall with gates were brought to light in 1918 by Antonios Keramopoulos and more recently by members of the Greek Archaeological Service at various points on the peninsula of Kamatero and below it at Ambelaki.

The port of historical Salamis is referred to by Pausanias in his *Description of Greece: Attica*<sup>5</sup> and also by Skylax, the geographer, in his work *Periplus*, who reserves a Laconic phrase for it: "Salamis is an island, a city and a port" (Κατὰ τοῦτό ἐστι Σαλαμίς νῆσος καὶ πόλις καὶ λιμὴν)<sup>6</sup>.

Large parts of the port-installations in the bay of Ambelaki now lie underwater due to the rise of the water level in the Straits since Classical times and to subsequent changes in the shoreline in the bay.

The ancient harbour-works in the bay of Ambelaki have been reported or indicated on maps by several scholars of the 19th century and of the early 20th century including H. Schliemann (1875), H. Gerhard Lolling (1884), E. Curtius and J.A. Kaupert (1895), J.G. Frazer (1898), Usslar (1900), P. Rediadis (1902, 1911), H. Raase (1904) and C. Rados (1915).

Remnants of harbour-installations in the innermost part of the bay of Ambelaki, apparently more of what is visible today, are clearly marked on a rare map of Salamis<sup>7</sup> prepared by German surveyors between 1889 and 1891 (Fig. 1); also on J.A. Kaupert's archaeological map (1:25.000) of Salamis published in 1893 (see *Karten von Attika*, Dietrich Reimer, Berlin, 1893, Bl. XXI; and here Fig. 5).

Remains of port-installations, represented by blocks of varying size, can be seen today on all three sides of the inner bay of Ambelaki, especially along the west (Fig. 6). They include moles, rectangular constructions and other works whose exact character, nevertheless, cannot be recognized without excavation and underwater exploration (Figs 7, 9).

Of particular interest and very probably of Classical/Hellenistic date is a long row of blocks on the west side of the bay, lying mostly underwater and running roughly W-E (Figs 6, 8, 9).

A mole, largely dismantled, is found on the south side, immediately below the Mamais House (Akti Themistokleous 17). It runs NE-SW and has a visible length of 37.30 m (Fig. 10).

A mole, arguably of much later date, in use today on the north side of the bay, just southeast of the old Kriezis House in Salamis Avenue, is built with ancient square blocks, the largest of which are 1.20 to 1.30 m long. It runs N-S and is traceable for roughly 54.50 m, with a width ranging from 1.40 to 1.60 m (Figs 11, 12).

At a short distance west of this mole and close to shore are the submerged stone foundations of an apparently rectangular construction oriented N-S and consisting of three walls measuring 20 m, 11.40 m and 3 m respectively. These foundations are seen only at certain times of the year when the water recedes.

Segments of stone-walls are preserved on land at various points in the northern and western parts of the shore of the bay, close to the shoreline or at short distances from it. Some of these are likely to belong to the port-installations or to constructions whose functions were linked to the port.

On the basis of the testimony of old people at Ambelaki there also exist underwater what seem to be stone-paved platforms or corridors on the western side of the inner bay. Could these represent remnants of dry docks for ship-maintenance? Shipheds perhaps?

Finally, evidence for the *floruit* of the port of Salamis is provided by the surface pottery which we have observed in the northern and western parts of the shore of the inner bay. It is mainly Classical and Hellenistic containing a high proportion of black-glazed sherds of the finest Attic quality.

### **Kolones (Figs 1,13-17)**

Still in the historical period, we shall now move on to the southern coast of Salamis and stop at the small bay at Kolones, which has a mouth measuring c. 455 m and is a good anchorage for small boats (Fig. 13). The place-name Kolones may well refer to "columns" which stood here in the past; in fact two (column) capitals, a Doric one and an Early Christian Ionic one, have already been reported from this area by Prof. D.I. Pallas.

The visible ancient remains at the site of Kolones including a tower, a fortress and remnants of harbourworks were first reported by Edward Dodwell early in the 19th century<sup>8</sup> and were later to be dealt with to varying degree by a number of Greek scholars including I. Rizos Rangavis (1854), S. Stouraitis (1901), I. Dragatsis (1920), and E. Vranopoulos (1972), and most recently by Prof. D.I. Pallas<sup>9</sup>.

While the harbour at Ambelaki is basically associated with a city and its commerce, the smaller harbour at Kolones gives access to an inhabited area of an arguably different character.

Here at Kolones, the probable existence of an ancient mole or quay is suggested by a number of worked blocks of stone ranging in length from c. 75 cm to 1.20 m, which are found scattered on the shore by the sea, at the western end of the main beach and further west (Fig. 14).

A large block, 1.05 m long, and still in situ, is seen a few meters east of a modern cement ramp used for hauling boats ashore. Eight other blocks, almost all of them apparently displaced, can be spotted at points along the shore up to a distance of c. 75 m west of the large block in situ. The ceramic material lying around in this part of the shore included fragments of tiles, among them three of Early Christian type, and a quantity of unpainted sherds, mostly ranging in date from Classical to Late Roman times<sup>10</sup>.

At a distance of c. 400 m north of the harbour is a small acropolis on which are preserved substantial remains of walls, defensive or otherwise. Certain of these walls have been incorporated into an old farmhouse, (e.g. Fig. 15) the Vassiliou House.

A stretch of wall, on the south side of the acropolis, built of large worked blocks, is impressive (Fig. 15). It runs for c. 15 m, with a maximum preserved height of 2.40 m. The few black-glazed sherds seen on the acropolis, immediately north of the Vassiliou House, point to a Classical/early Hellenistic date for our fortress.

To the northwest of the pebbly beach at Kolones, at the top of a hill rising to a height of c. 38 m and overlooking the harbour, are the remains of a round tower (Figs 16, 17). The tower, still preserving its entrance (width on the outside: 1.50 m) on the north side with its lintel (2 m long and 55 cm wide) still *in situ*, has a diameter of 10.70 m and is built of large blocks ranging in length from 80 cm to 1.50 m and exceeding 50 cm in height. As with the fortress, a number of fine black-glazed sherds from inside the tower are assignable to Classical/early Hellenistic times.

Towers similar to the one at Kolones are known from Attica, the Megarid, the Argolid and other areas and from several Aegean islands, notably Siphnos, Thasos and Ceos. The theories as to their purpose were discussed by John Young in 1956<sup>11</sup>. These towers have been invariably interpreted as forts, watchtowers, lighthouses, beacon-towers, and refuges from pirates. It is possible, however, that in many cases they had more than one function.

Our example may have been a watchtower, backed by a fort. It may also have been a lighthouse, standing, as it does, at the highest point of the harbour and at one of the southernmost points of Salamis, a deliverance for ships and sailors. If so, what we have here is the predecessor of the modern stone-built lighthouse on the nearby Cape Kochi (Fig. 18).

### **Prehistoric harbours (Figs 1,19)**

Still in the south, it is worth pondering for a while on the conditions in the southern part of the island in prehistoric times. The occurrence of natural harbours on the southern coast may help us to explain the presence of an impressive ring of settlement sites in Southern Salamis which on the evidence of surface pottery cover the period from at least as early as the beginning of the Early Bronze Age to the end of the Mycenaean.

Most of these sites have been identified by Prof. D.I. Pallas<sup>12</sup> and are currently under scrutiny jointly with the author. Of special interest, is a series of fortified sites including Satirli: Kastelli, Ginani: Kastro, Maliza: Aspri Rachi, Mikri Kiapha and Sklavos, found at varying distances from the southern coast of Salamis. All are fine acropolis sites, with remnants of substantial fortification walls or simpler peribolos walls, and having a commanding view towards the sea. Each one of them can be shown to have been associated with at least one natural harbour on the southern coast. Their strategic locations may well have been selected by the inhabitants to share in the control of sea-routes using the passage between Salamis and Aegina in the Saronic Gulf. The economy of these settlements must have depended to a considerable degree on fishing, sea-trade and other maritime activities possibly including piracy<sup>13</sup>. The special topography of the fortified sites identified and the locations of possible harbours on the southern coast of the island are bound to give rise to several questions concerning security, defence and contact in the Bronze Age Saronic. The role of piracy, an aspect of prehistoric economic life often neglected among the more conservative prehistorians, but which is plentifully documented in ancient sources for both historical as well as

prehistoric times, will inevitably have to be reappraised. Even Ajax, a figure of great size and strength, represented by Homer as the Ares of the Greeks, did not remain indifferent to the temptations of piracy, within the district of the Saronic and the Argolic Gulfs, to judge from a passage in Hesiod's *Catalogues of Women*<sup>14</sup>.

Having mentioned Ajax and the Mycenaeans of Salamis, let me finish, by saying that I very much look forward to explaining in a future paper, the following:

Firstly, why we expect three sites in Southern Salamis to form a major Mycenaean triangle: the harbour of Peristeria (with its two islets) east of Kolones, the finest anchorage in the southernmost part of the island, known for centuries (Fig. 19); the site of Ginani, at about a 45 minute walk (or c. 2 kms) north of the eastern beach at Peristeria, a habitation site of some size, where we have succeeded in identifying Late Mycenaean sherds, certainly including LH III C among the surface pottery; and the site of a rather extensive Mycenaean cemetery of chamber tombs in the area of Chalioti<sup>15</sup> at a short distance northeast of Peristeria which included burials belonging to Late Helladic IIIA - III C1.

Secondly, I will attempt to demonstrate how Strabo's crucial phrase that the old capital of Salamis "faces towards Aegina and the south wind" (...ἔχει δ' ὀμώ-  
νυμον πόλιν, τὴν μὲν ἀρχαίαν ἔρημον πρὸς Αἴγιναν τετραμμένην καὶ πρὸς νό-  
τον...) <sup>16</sup>, seen against the new evidence emerging from Prof. D.I. Pallas's continuing work in Southern Salamis, now seems to assume a new meaning.

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## NOTES

1. An extended version of this communication, with fuller bibliographical references, will be published in a larger work on Salamis that is being prepared by the author.
2. This project, entitled "Ajax: A Project on Salamis", has recently received substantial financial assistance from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, New York (March 1990).
3. *Εικόνες του Ελληνικού χώρου μετά την Απελευθέρωση* (Aquarelles and drawings by C. Rottmann and L. Lange, Text by Marinos Kalligas), Commercial Bank of Greece, Athens, 1977, p. 56, Pl. 20.
4. The Geography, 9.1.9. See *The Geography of Strabo* (with an English translation by H.L. Jones), Vol. IV, London, 1954, pp. 250-253.
5. *The Description of Greece (Attica)*, I. 35.3. See N.D. Papachatzis, *Παυσανίου Ελλάδος Περιήγησις: Αττικά*, Athens, 1974, pp. 457-459.
6. *Scylacis Caryandensis Periplus*, 57. See C. Müller, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Vol. I, Paris, 1861, p. 46.
7. *Karte von Attika in 1:100.000, Sect. Salamis (No 4)*, Verlag von Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), Berlin S.W. Wilhelmstrasse 29.
8. Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour Through Greece, During the Years 1801, 1805 and 1806*, London, 1819, pp. 576-577.
9. D.I. Pallas, "Αρχαιολογικές επισημάνσεις στη Σαλαμίνα", *Archaeologikon Deltion* 42 (1987) A (forthcoming).
10. A number of diagnostic surface potsherds and tiles found at Kolones have already been deposited in the Museum of Salamis.
11. See John H. Young, "Studies in South Attica: Country Estates at Sounion", *Hesperia* XXV (1956), pp. 131 ff.
12. See D.I. Pallas, *op. cit.* (n. 9, above); also relevant information contained in D.I. Pallas, "Βροκή < Βοϊκή> Σαλαμίνας τοπωνυμικά-τοπογραφικά-ιστορικά", *Athena*, Vol. 80 (1988), pp. 99-135.
13. See Y.G. Lolos, "Piracy in the Prehistoric Aegean: Some Evidence from South Salamis", *ΕΝΑΛΙΑ: Annual* 1989, Vol. I, 1990, p. 43.
14. *Catalogues of Women and Eoiae*, 68.55-62. See *Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (with an English translation by H.G. Evelyn-White), William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1967, pp. 196-197:  

"And from Salamis Αϊας blameless warrior (ἀμώμητος πολεμιστής) sought her to wife, and offered fitting gifts, even wonderful deeds; for he said that he would drive together and give the shambling oxen and strong sheep of all those who lived in Troezen and Epidaurus near the sea, and in the island of Aegina and in Mases, sons of Achaeans, and shadowy Megara and frowning Corinthus, and Hermione and Asine which lie along the sea: for he was famous with the long spear (ἔγχει μακρῶ)".
15. On the Late Mycenaean chamber tomb cemetery at Chalioti see: P. Parthenis, "Σαλαμίς" *Ἐλευθερουδάκη Σύγχρονος Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, Vol. 11: Supplement, Athens, p. 738 (1126); D. Lazaridis, *Archaeologikon Deltion* 22 (1967) B, Pl. 110a; N.D. Papachatzis, *op. cit.* (see n.5, above), p. 457; W.G. Cavanagh, *Attic Burial Customs*, ca. 2000-700 BC, Ph. D. thesis, Bedford College, University of London, vol. II, 1977, p.94.
16. The Geography, 9.1.9. See also note 4, above.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Map of Salamis (1:100.000)  
 1: Ambelaki;  
 2: Kolones;  
 3: Peristeria
- Fig. 2 Bay of Ambelaki, from W. Water-colour by Carl Rottmann (1834-1835). See n.3, above.
- Fig. 3 View of village and bay of Ambelaki, from W. (1989).
- Fig. 4 Map of the village and bay of Ambelaki, with the peninsula of Pounta (the ancient Kolouris) and part of the peninsula of Kynosoura. See *Ναύσταθμος Σαλαμίνος και Όρμος Κεραταινίου*: Map (1:10.000) prepared by E. Angelidis, A. Chrisanthis, P. Roussen and I. Bouboulis, Athens, 1916.
- Fig. 5 Bay of Ambelaki, with Kolouris and Kynosoura. See A. Ch. Chatzis, "Τα αρχαία ονόματα της νήσου Σαλαμίνος", *Archaeologike Ephemeris* 1930, p. 67, Fig. 1.
- Fig. 6 Ambelaki. Inner bay, from N. (1989).
- Fig. 7 Ambelaki. Ancient harbour-works on the west side of the inner bay, from N.W. (1989).
- Fig. 8 Ambelaki. Ancient harbour-works on the west side of the inner bay, from W. (1989).
- Fig. 9 Ambelaki. Ancient harbour-works on the west side of the inner bay, from S./S.W. (1989).
- Fig. 10 Ambelaki. Mole on the south side of the inner bay, from S./S.W. (1989).
- Fig. 11 Ambelaki. Mole on the north side of the inner bay, from N. (1989).
- Fig. 12 Ambelaki. Mole on the north side of the inner bay, from S. (1989).
- Fig. 13 Kolones. Inner bay, from W./N.W. (1989).
- Fig. 14 Kolones. Western end of beach, where several worked blocks of stone have been spotted (1989).
- Fig. 15 Kolones. Part of wall, incorporated into the Vassiliou House, from S. (1989).
- Fig. 16 Kolones. Round tower, from S./SE. (1989).
- Fig. 17 Kolones. Entrance of round tower, from N./N.E. (1989).
- Fig. 18 Point Kochi. Modern stone-built lighthouse (1989).
- Fig. 19 Peristeria. Mycenaean harbour, from N.E. (1989). An anchorage for Ajax?

(All photographs are by Mr. Nicholas Zervoglos)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

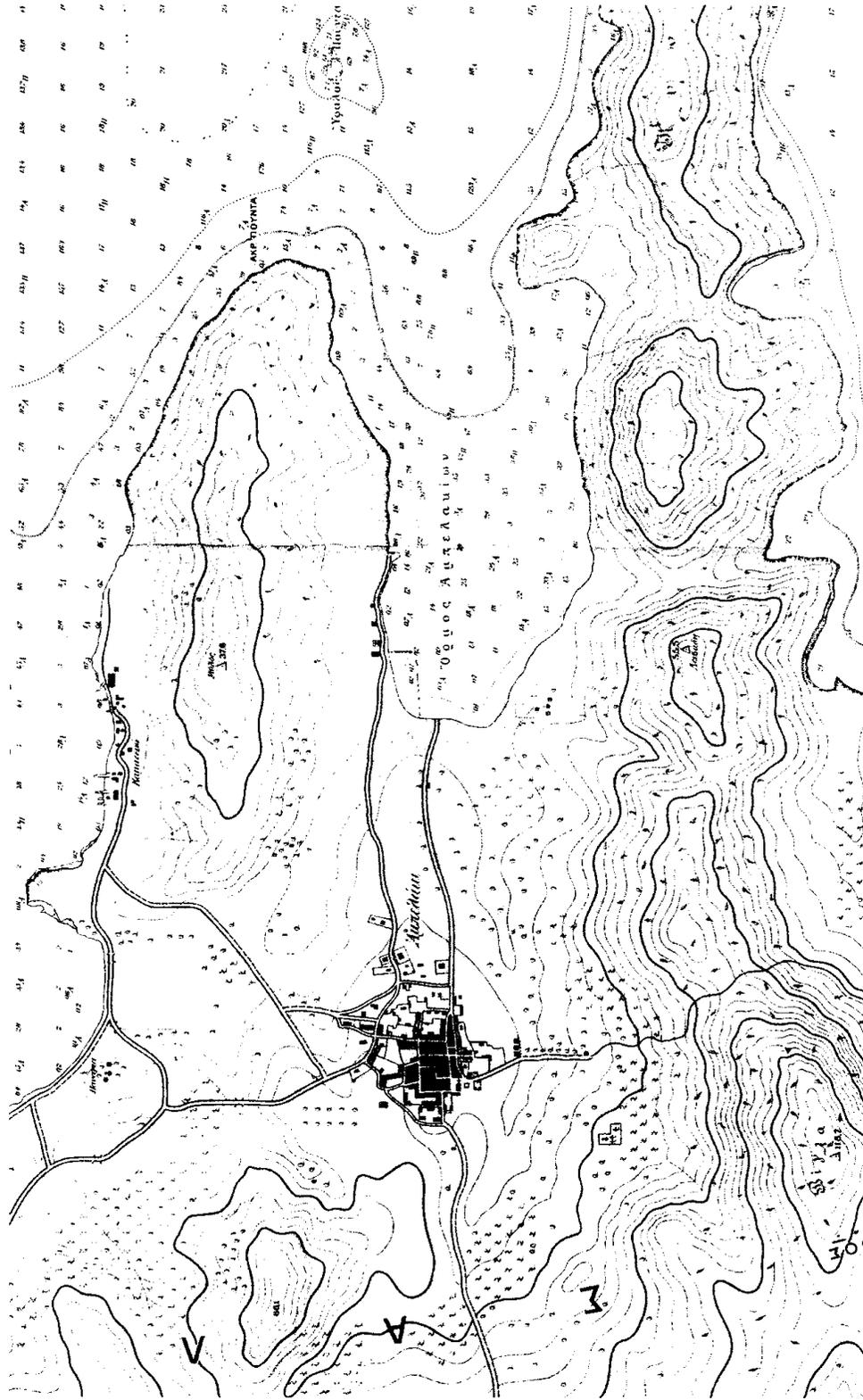


Fig. 4

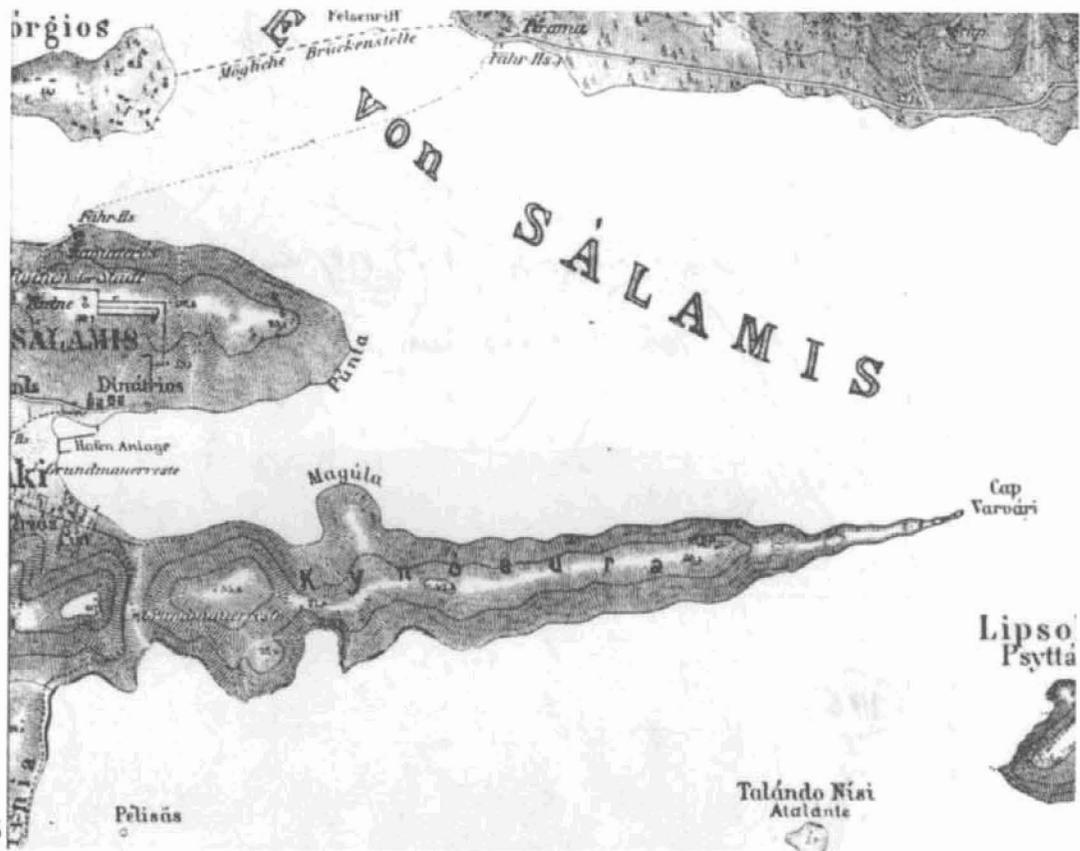


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

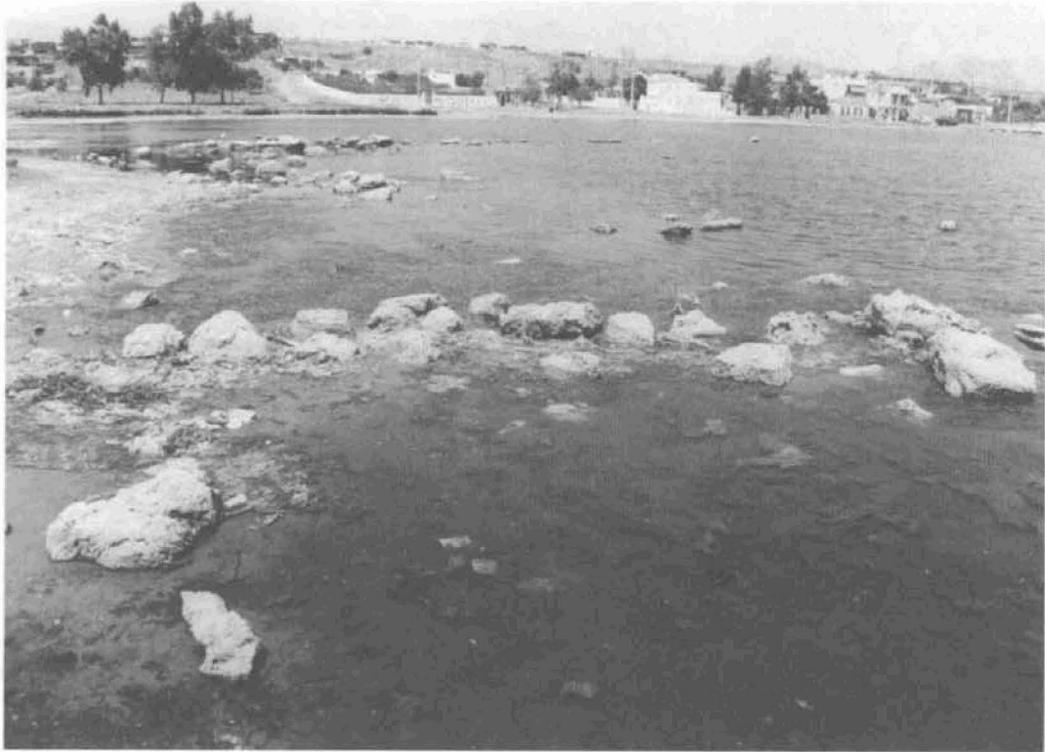


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



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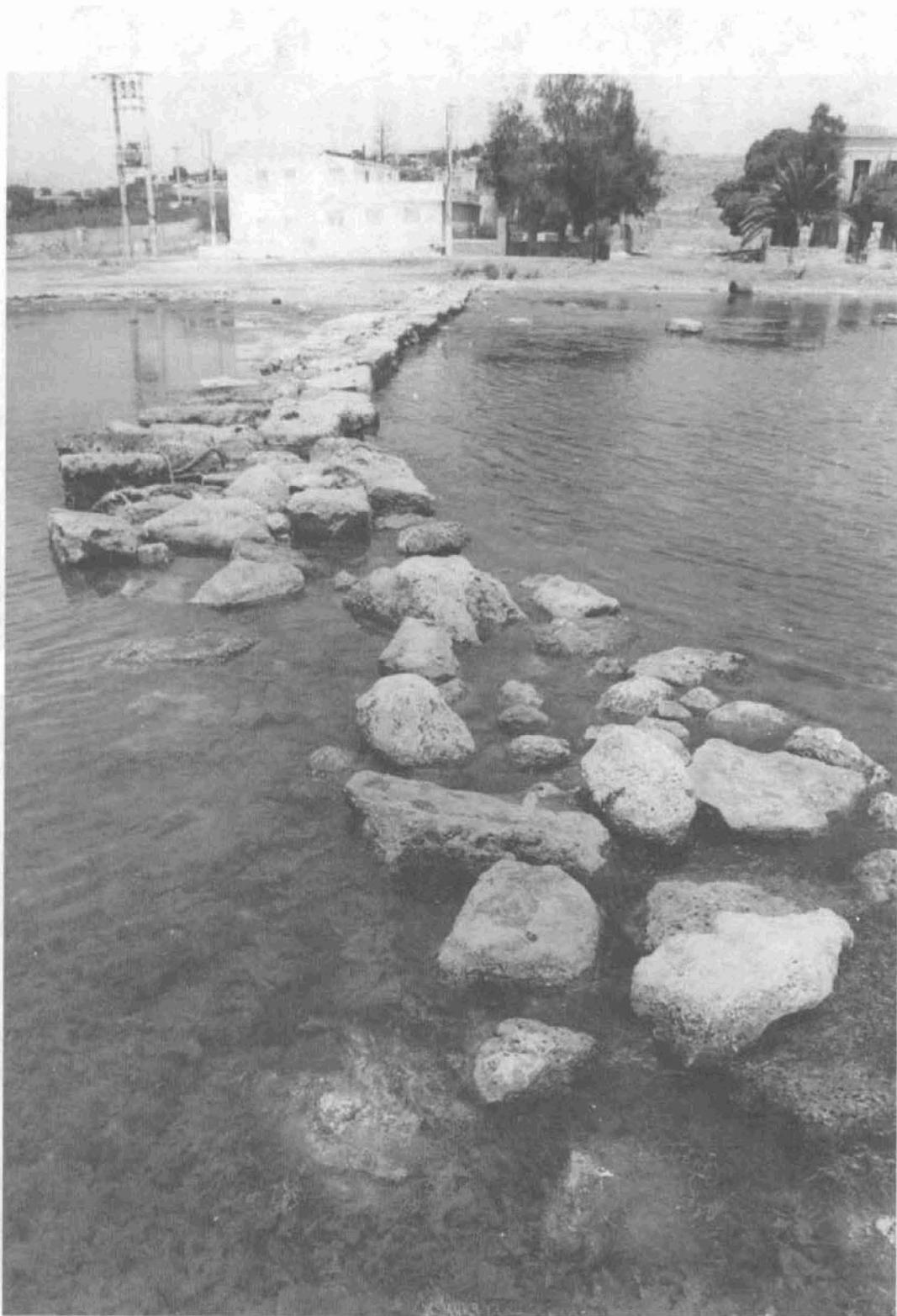


Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19