EVIA
A Ridge of Character
The Links Between Geology, Myth and People/Places

There is no picture that represents Evia.

Evia is situated adjacent to central mainland Greece, but does not have an actual connection to the mainland. The water surrounding Chalkida does not simply provide access to the mainland. Rather, it serves as a focal point or "hinge" for the entire area. If we (drive and walk) across the Chalkida Bridge, you experience the sound of the mainland as it appears from 'Land' but as you travel toward the middle of the bridge, the sound grows clearer and distinctly 'Land'; The Nausea of engine fumes is replaced with a salty, breathable scent; the “Nausea” of brackish water is replaced with the moisture of sea birds flying over you, and a rythmic equalization of anthropogenic thundering down the bridge morphed with the incoming tidal pulse against the bridge. The expansive horizon is broadly visible, and the wind takes on different dynamic characteristics. As you step off the bridge, the structures of the mainland give way to the structures of Evia, the island.

There are 3 levels through which we can understand Evia:

1. Geologic processes that create uplift.
2. Mythological beliefs associated with Evia.
3. The People who have always lived in Evia.

—

I Geologic "Spines"

The Processes of Uplift, Fracture, and Thermal Memory.

There is a visible Tectonic Zone of Evia. Two major tectonic plates that comprise the tectonic activity of the Aegean Region are balanced on the same floor, yet separate and moving apart from one another in tremendous tension during this ongoing "dance." The northern edge of the African plate has tilted westward toward the Eurasian plate, as shown in the very low level of the ground at Evia, and in the duelling conflict between fractured blocks and uplift, and fragmented ridges.

Geology isn't just a pretty backdrop; it is your history.

The current of the Euripus Strait in Chalkida, Greece, reverses direction roughly every six hours, creating one of the most unusual tidal events occurring within the Mediterranean region.[2] This was quite troubling to earlier observers of this waterway as well. Strabo remarked how the current "changes direction many times each day", thus complicating the effort to measure the time of day in any manner, real or imagined.[3] Each time I cross this rough water, I think of how many questions in my own life have come full circle on me, but I am still unable to reach any form of a resolution. The ongoing motion of the tide is a complete metaphor of the unknown as both the landscape and my own mind have been left with unanswered questions and are currently suspended in motion between options.

It has been said that Aristotle studied the Tide with great passion, and reports suggest he died out of frustration attempting to explain it.It is currently debated whether or not this is factual or fictitious; however, this study will alter the course of history for this region. Water did not allow for its simplification.

The Strait of Euripus teaches us that movement does not always have to be linear.

Geothermal systems have developed the thermal springs at Loutra Aidipsou in northern Greece through the fracturing of the Earth's crust. Plutarch claimed that the Romans used these thermal springs as baths during the 1st Century BC. The thermal springs are

The northern coast of Evia Island has been formed from one of the tectonic processes taking place along this active rift. The volcanic islands of Lichadonisia have formed as a consequence of the fracturing of the northern coast, making Evia Island a changing landform.

Evia Island has been proven to be a negotiable landform.

At the centre of Evia Island is Mount Dirfys. Dirfys has not only altered itself to serve as an elevation, but has also modified and changed various aspects of the weather. By trapping the moisture within an atmosphere, Mount Dirfys has altered the climate of the western side of the island as a result of the differences between the mountains of Evia Island and mainland Greece. Many of the springs on Mount Dirfys still flow to this day, even though all of the mainland springs below Evia have dried out.In many ways, a location's hydrology is a direct result of the geology in that area. Due to the significant elevation of Dirfy's Peak, the peak captures drifting mist/rain; this mist/rain collects and seeps into the ground beneath the peak, feeding into the springs below the surface of the ground; it is these springs that sustain the chestnuts and cooler regions of forest growth in the depressions formed by the topographical prominence of Dirfy. The chestnut and oak trees found in the slopes of Dirfy are found where there is sufficient moisture to support the growth of the trees, not accidentally. The abundant growth of vegetation (trees and underbrush) at Dirfy is why livestock/the herders who tended to livestock/lumberjacks settled at the base of Dirfy, creating communities such as Steni that depended on timber production and sheep-raising for their livelihoods — prompting our earlier anthropological observations about the relationship of hydrology and vegetation to the settlement choices of humans.

Dirfy is an ocean of water!

II. Mythology as Life Events of Significance.

Artemis, Poseidon, and the Language of Unstable Geology.

The ancient Hellenes associated the geological/theological events that were occurring with the order of things on earth. Whenever the earth would shake, the ancient Hellenes attributed it to Poseidon's will, based on the name "Earth-Shaker." The modern-day equivalent of the ancient Hellas "Earth-Shaker" is the seismograph unit, which provides the definition of the position of a fault-line/fault in the earth at a moment in time, much like the ancient Hellenes referred to the shaking of the earth (when it would occur) as the movement of Poseidon. The connection between earth shaking and earthquakes can be found in the ink of a seismograph or the words of the ancient Hellas epithets. All that is contained in geology and theology as it pertains to the movement of the earth is also contained in contemporary/secular terms; each era has its associated meaning; both demonstrate that the earth has an agency operating upon it. The presence of both myth and geology seems to suggest that both co-authored the reality of Evia together.

Upon the first shaking of the Earth, Poseidon was the cause of its movement. In the Iliads, Homer states:

"Poseidon! God of Earthquake, the one who causes all to tremble upon this Earth." Five:<sup/>

Water is not only an inactive segment of the Earth; it is also a segment of action to be found in a given geographical location; it can be classified as an area of Unrest, an area of Sovereignty, and as such, a place of Divinity. Therefore, even today, many of the villagers who live along the coast of Evia gather at the Seashore prior to embarking on their respective journeys. They will often bend down to touch the water's edge and, as a sign of respect, will toss coins or some bread or a vial of wine into the water as an offering. On an early morning in Limni, I watched as a fisherman, just prior to casting his net for fish, traced a cross across the bow of his boat, then washed his hand in the water and allowed it to flow through his fingers as while saying an invocation for a safe trip and for calm sea conditions. The ritual acts performed, without ceremony, exemplify how the power of the Water continues to be acknowledged and venerated. Although the form of the ritual acts may change, the objective of the ritual acts has not

changed: they are done to petition the Water to grant the individual(s) returning to shore and to continue receiving the blessing and favour of the Moving Sovereign Water.

If you visit Agia Anna or Kalamos and gaze out toward the Aegean Sea, you should become aware of how mighty the Waters are. The Winds travel long distances before they reach the Land, and in this instance, the Water. The wind blows backward across the surface of water, which causes it to create waves, and all humans experience this pressure on their bodies at all times.

The environment does not exist outside of us; the earth is the essence of nature.

Utilising mythology teaches us how to coexist and work with nature. For instance, during a festival celebrating Artemis, I witnessed a woman instructing her daughter to gather wildflowers in the grove of olive trees "as the ancients did" at sunrise.

Some of my neighbours were gathered at the edge of the same field, giving thanks and making a prayer for their own health and well-being by dipping a branch in the spring.

Traditional practices/ideologies may no longer exist; they may be hidden below the surface in some form.

The temple of Artemis was located fairly close to Amarynthos, and a ceremonial procession was held at this location between Amarynthos and Eretria (what locals called the festival of Artemis) during the time that the offering was made there.

It should be noted that the image of Artemis as depicted by Pausanias in their time differed from later representations of her in marble by another artist during this time, as the earlier image of Artemis represented her as both a goddess of boundaries and as both a goddess of nature and death and, therefore, the worship of this goddess could be seen through traversing the landscape. The Movement creates the Sacred Place. Think of entering into the Artemis parade at sunrise with the earth around you glowing with a soft golden light. Each step forward presses the sole of your sandal on the dew-damp grass and pebbles of the earth; the sound of your feet crunching the little pebbles beneath them. The chilled air has a faint smell of thyme in it, while the faint buzz of your neighbours talking together is mixed with the sharp noise of birds calling from a distance away. With each step, the earth appears to pulsate under the

soles of your feet. The act of walking and purposefully moving through the fields and the groves is a way to worship and renew your relationship with the land.

The geography of the sacred paths was of the same importance as the geography of the sacred altar.

The mountains, springs, rivers, and forests have changed through human hands, yet they possess a divine nature, and they continue to exist with divine power. The nature of this divine connection to the land has been shaped by the weathered breaks and tears in the land of Evia and passed down over time as myth or legend.

The so-called "Dragon Houses" found upon Mount Ochi are proof of a tremendous force of labour or a great command which could have moved, moved, and then created them: the Dragon Houses above their former site are made from 20 ton stones or blocks, travelled the distance from where they were quarried to the mountain range, created a structure that resembles nothing we know of. The builders of these immense, non-mortared structures constructed them using two different techniques; one used gravity as a force, and the other created a means of fitting together the pieces so they would not fall apart without being attached. There are ongoing debates regarding the dating of these monuments, as some suggest they were constructed during the Hellenistic era. The purpose of these monuments has also not been discovered yet.

When an explanation fails to provide clarity for some event or situation, a myth is created. Myth includes giants, heroes and dragons. While these may appear to be the result of a child's imagination, they are all the result of an attempt to convey some sense of size outside the realm of normality. The term used to describe the large buildings built by the ancients as dragon houses records, in the minds of their creators, their sense of awe for what they saw, but makes no attempt to provide an explanation for them.

Silence.

The myths of Evia are not used to enhance the decorative features of the environment. They provide interpretive frameworks.

– —

III. Continuity of the Human Race

: Lefkandi and the Rejection of the Collapse.

Geological features provide physical structures for human existence; myths are the foundations that form the base of the sculptures that create human existence; and the consistent presence of humans creates a consistent basis for persistence. Many historians have referred to the period following the collapse of Mycenaean palaces as a "dark" period in human history for the last several hundred years; however, excavations conducted in Lefkandi have forced a reformulation of prior beliefs regarding the period following the collapse of the Mycenaean world. They have found many elite burial sites and elite objects with no associated trade, demonstrating that they are located within the same general geographic area from which they originated, so in fact, Lefkandi provides evidence of a cultural continuation and is not evidence of a cultural collapse.[8] All of the archaeological sites surrounding Lefkandi or located around their contemporaneous cities and towns (such as Thebes) have not been continuously occupied for approximately 1,500 years. Additionally, given that Thebes has been abandoned for over 500 years, it stands as the last remnant (in relation to Evia) of a culture no longer present. In contrast, Lefkandi has been consistently inhabited and is therefore of great historical significance. The ridge has retained its fullness. It is experiencing evolution and change.

Evia is geographically positioned at the edge of the Mediterranean region, and has not yet been fully taken into the dominant nations that dominate the mainland. This fact is part of the reason for Evia's persistent habitation and existence. Harbours like Limni, for example, are examples of the persistent nature of Evia's coastal locations. They are not associated with grandiosity – they are present; therefore, you can hear a fisherman tell his friend tomorrow morning that he should make a double-knotted fishing line for his boat Yianni, because tomorrow evening, the wind will shift on him from the north, and so he would have no solution to his problem. The fisherman moved forward to tell Yianni that the wind will come with a blowing force that is sharp and very hard to navigate. While a shopkeeper or mechanic leans back at a waterfront café under sycamore trees and murmurs to himself, "Motors have come and gone, but the sea salt is always present". The baker discusses with an elderly woman about the rising levels of water and orange mud tracks forming through her vegetable garden, even though it is early afternoon. All these events that happen within or around the harbour provide many sites and reminders that the life of this region was lived and continues to be lived in numerous ways, intermingling between

stone, water, and sound.

In Ancient Greece, soil was the point of origin for the foundation of hero worship, and soil created a link between memory and place. Antonaccio has articulated that commemorating and honouring one's ancestors was accomplished with a common marker identified by the territorial markers of a community that made a physical connection and included a community in that physical area. As a result of the permanence of Evia's settlement, Evia has also been the location for a memory that has permanence and grounding. Presently, those memory markers have also become memorials that are more private in nature. There are many small communities where an icon of some kind has not been cared for, and generations later becomes part of the memory of a gathering – an annual meeting around the feast table – to remember ancestors, as well as to include the most recently born members of the family. Family members may also use materials, such as a grandfather's grapevines or a stone that was mortared into place by a family ancestor, to delineate boundaries of a family. These items were created for the purpose of having a silent connection with the land where the family lives, rather than as decoration. When viewed in this way, the memories of those who lived in the past are transformed into what we call modern-day hero worship, the latter having no definite form and not being a stone infrastructure, but consisting only of habits and traditions that bind families to the land in which they have lived.

Each period is based on the prior one but none erases the contribution of each earlier period.

Several factors have contributed to shaping this area's rich and varied cultural heritage:

During the Mycenaean Era, the Archaic and Classical Eras bled into each other.
The Romans helped to add to the cultural mix.
The Byzantines continued the culture, but did so on top of an already established cultural root system.
The Frankish, Venetian, and Ottoman cultures placed their layers upon the existing culture of this area. Dragon Houses of the Early Iron Age extend across a large, rocky outcrop known as Castello Rosso, located on the southern tip of the island of Evia. This fortified settlement has served as a fortified site since the Neolithic Period; however, Evia will not allow any one historical structure or narrative to define it. Evia was occupied in prehistory by its submerged, tectonic and highland regions;

therefore, there has been continuous disruption of the landscape throughout time, allowing for plenty of time for another version of the timeline.

Give a voice to the ridge.

Experience a teacher through the ridge.

When I think about Evia, what comes to mind initially isn't its natural beauty (the beaches), but instead, how my feet felt after I stepped off the shoreline and onto the ridge. I immediately had a slow, heavy feeling in my lungs, as well as the smell of pine trees mixed with salt in the air. As I walked, the ground felt soft, and my foot would sink into the constantly shifting rocks, creating a surface to walk on; therefore, based on the decline of the ground, the slope of the decline and my speed, every step and all of my movements were conscious and aware of the ground beneath me.

I know where to find the limit.

The ever-changing tides of Chalkida, the wind-shaped slopes of Ochi, and the definitions of the dramatic realities of existence help define what is, in fact, historical reality, and how historical reality provides us with a context for the definitions between greatness and drama.

Water travels in two parts.

Mountains keep clouds (moisture) within their canyon bodies, where there is no light.

Thermal springs can be found through invisible fissures.

The volcanic rocks interconnect with the exceedingly long silence experienced by the Hellenes with the stone.

You need to walk to visit the temples.

The discipline of archaeology defines the historical boundaries of time, but those same boundaries are often contradictory.

The Mesoamericans cannot be defined.

Evia would not hide from the past; instead, the past lives within Evia. When walking across the island of Evia from one end to the opposite side, it's clear that not much (geologically and socially) separates them. Recently, the ground north of Agios Dimitrios has been disturbed by people tramping through olive orchards where red clay has been exposed and also the places where homes were once situated will have to be moved because they are (or will be soon) lost to earth; and in Limni, those homes previously lost to fire are now required to be moved away from the canyon due to the fact that the land is receding back toward the water from both sides of the eastern half of Evia. New floods could occur if it rains again.

Continuity has been earned.

Stability has been tenuous.

Memory is traced through the panorama of the land.

Water, stone and story exist as one thing and cannot easily be divided.

They rise together.

They break apart together.

They hold together.

The ridge remains.

If you walk up the ridge, you will see eternity. You will see how every step we take will become part of the memory of that ridge and how these steps will keep alive our shared persistence with each crossing of those stones. By sharing and affirming our connection to the island of Evia and being present there, we ensure the survival of the island created from the shared stories and footsteps of all who have traversed those stones. Through our collective remembrance and walking process, we will become the guardians of the survival of Evia.

Endnotes

[1] Papazachos, B. C. and Papazachou, C. B., The Earthquakes of Greece, Ziti Publications, 2003
[2] Tsimplis, M. N., Tidal Oscillations in the Euripus Strait, Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 1997
[3] Strabo, Geography 9.2.2
[4] Plutarch, Life of Sulla 26
[5] Homer, Iliad 13.20-25
[6] Pausanias, Description of Greece 1.31.4
[7] Mazarakis Ainian, A., The "Dragon Houses" of Southern Euboea, 1997
[8] Popham, M., Calligas, P. & Sackett, L.H. Lefkandi I: The Iron Age Settlement, British School of Athens, 1980
[9] Antonaccio, C.M., An Archaeology of Ancestors: Tomb Cult and Hero Cult in Early Greece, Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 1995.