

Egyptian Marbles Found in Kythera

by John Fardoulis - the Kytherian Research Group

The Parthenon is one of the major Hellenic wonders of the world, of interest to Greeks around the globe.

There's a piece of history that links Kythera with the Parthenon, when a sailing ship, the Mentor brig sank off Avlemonas in September 1802, carrying 16 crates of sculptures from the Parthenon and other antiquities.

Now, more than 200 years later, Kythera's link to the Parthenon, and associated 'Marbles' debate has been rekindled through the Mentor shipwreck excavation.

Since this project started, well over a million dollars of publicity has been created in international media from information about the Mentor excavation, helping promote Kythera and remind people about the Marbles debate.

Surprise 2013 Finds

In 2013, there was an exciting new twist to the Mentor excavation, during final days of the project. Several ancient marble fragments were found in the forward section of the wreck, where the hold was.

These fragments are;

1. Marble
2. Ancient (Prehistoric)
3. Recovered from where the hold section of the ship was
4. The first marble fragments recovered by the Greek government from any of the Elgin shipments from the early 1800's



Greek archaeologist Alex Tourtas, sketching prehistoric Egyptian marble fragments in Avlemonas, Kythera

At the time, the Minister of Culture and Prime Minister of Greece were informed of finds, because



Two of the Egyptian fragments were part of a prehistoric marble relief.



of a good chance that they were stray fragments from the Parthenon.

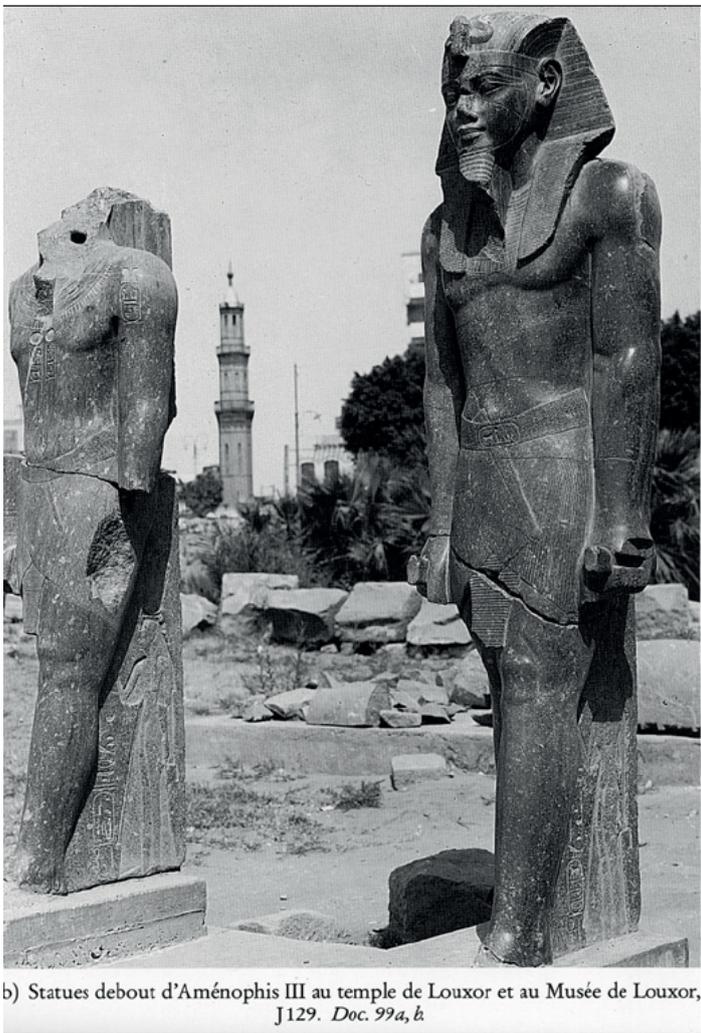
However, after detailed archaeological study, these fragments were determined to be of Egyptian origin, probably over three thousand years old, much older than the Parthenon.



Another Egyptian fragment is from a prehistoric colossal statue of the god Ra.

The role played by these ancient antiquities in the Mentor's voyage is still a mystery. Whether further pieces exist, buried in the sand, 22 metres under the

sea is also a mystery. The only way to know if more pieces are buried under the seabed is to excavate further.



b) Statues debout d'Aménophis III au temple de Louxor et au Musée de Louxor, J129. Doc. 99a, b

Finding ancient marble fragments from an Elgin treasure ship has international significance, and the potential to create more media exposure than any ever for the Marbles debate - and Kythera. If I was the Prime Minister of Greece, I'd publicly hand over the Egyptian fragments to the Egyptian government, as a symbolic gesture that would attract a lot of public attention.

As you can imagine, these finds are massive for Kythera, and Kytherians around the world.

Raising the Wreck



An unprecedented amount of work took place on the Mentor wreck in 2013, actually raising a large piece of the stern section intact. You could say it was almost symbolic of raising the wreck.

This section has a concretion of wood, cannon balls, glass, possibly coins and other antiquities all fused together. This is

how parts of the wreck look today, and would make a fantastic museum exhibit, perhaps kept in water to preserve wood.



Raising a large part of the stern section of the wreck is symbolic. (Below left) Greek government representative, Louis Mercinier supervises the lifting of part of the stern section of the wreck onto the dock at Avlemonas.

There was talk in the past by members of Greek parliament, to raise part of the Mentor wreck and place it on exhibit in front of the New Acropolis Museum as symbolism for the Parthenon Marbles cause. We've actually done this, bringing up an impressive section that could go on display inside the New Acropolis Museum, with a plaque stating that it came from Kythera.

Another pistol, additional fob watch, more than a dozen cannon balls, coins, bottles, glass and ceramics were also recovered in 2013, with the amount of material retrieved, the greatest ever. It will take more than the entire Greek winter to process finds.

Exhibition – National Numismatic Museum



Prestigious Mentor exhibition in the National Numismatic Museum in Athens.

Efforts going into the Mentor project are paying dividends in a variety of ways. The Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities has staged an exhibition of time pieces recovered from the Mentor in Athens. This again helps promote Kythera and the Marbles debate. Dr Dimitris Kourkoumelis, Dr. Simosi and the Ephorate team deserve great thanks for this.

Summary

As you might understand, this is one of the highest profile projects for Kythera and the Diaspora around the world. Even though it's hard to put a financial value on archaeology, this project is actually run on a shoestring, running as a very-cost effective research project.

And value of new chapters now going in the history books and potentially (physically) in museums - for the Hellenic and Philhellenic world's is priceless.

It's an incredible story, with a UK documentary being discussed. Marble and other artefacts found would still be buried on the bottom of the sea, unknown, without this project. Thus far, several rooms of a museum could also be filled with material recovered from the wreck – preserving artefacts for future generations.

For more information see: www.krg.org.au/mentor

A who's who in Hellenic cultural circles attended the opening.



The same curator (far left, below) is responsible for the Antikythera exhibit in the National Archaeological Museum.



The Mentor shipwreck excavation is organised by the Fardoulis family of the Kytherian Research Group and financially supported by the Nicholas Anthony Aroney Trust and Kytherian Association of Australia. Their support is really appreciated.

Kytherian Genealogy Club

The attendance for the introduction talks to the Kytherian Genealogy Club have been meet great enthusiasm and we are at capacity for the talks. If you have missed out and are interested in hearing the talks and partaking in the Genealogy club, please advise us mobile 0418 449 469 or email us at kytheriangenes@hotmail.com

Amalia Samios and Kalie Zervos



Sample of church record of Iliariotisa Potamos