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The Excavations of the French School at Athens on Delos and the Transformations of the Mykonian Economy and Society, 1873–1913

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THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE FRENCH SCHOOL AT ATHENS ON DELOS
AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MYKONIAN ECONOMY
AND SOCIETY, 1873–1913

Margarita Nazou

ABSTRACT: This article discusses the economic and social changes on the island of Mykonos at the turn of the twentieth century based on the evidence from archives related to the archaeological excavations on the island of Delos. The study of the archives of the Municipality of Mykonos (DAM), the French School at Athens (EFA) and the Greek Ministry of Culture (Mykonos Museum) provides ample information on the large-scale excavations of the ancient remains on Delos and the work they offered to the islanders. The traditional occupations on the island such as farming, herding and fishing were frequently insufficient to sustain the island's population, which turned to migration. The wages offered by the EFA were an opportunity, especially for poor young men, to increase their income. The participation in the group activity of the excavation created new social relationships and challenged the community bonds of the Mykonians.

Mykonos is today a famous island community, with its inhabitants clearly orientated towards tourism and providing services to the hundreds of thousands of visitors who flock to it every year; it is among the top ten holiday destinations worldwide,¹ with an important contribution to Greek GDP.² However, in the middle of the nineteenth century Mykonos could be characterised as an island community of farmers and herders, who frequently turned to shipping and trade.³ From the 1870s onwards, a clear lack of creative expectations emerged,

¹ In 2021, Mykonos was the seventh most popular booked destination in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, according to Expedia. See "Travel Recovery Trend Report 2021 Q2," Expedia Group, accessed 10 April 2024, <https://info.advertising.expedia.com/travel-recovery-trend-report-download-2021-q2>.

² Tourism contributed about 18.5 percent to Greek GDP in 2022, with income from incoming tourists amounting to 17.3 billion euros (excluding cruises). "Basic Figures Repository 2022," Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), accessed 29 March 2024, https://sete.gr/en/basic-figures-repository/?_year=2022. Since Mykonos is among the top destinations, we can safely assume that it contributes several million euros to Greek GDP.

³ The Municipal Archive of Mykonos (DAM) provides detailed data on taxation and professional activities on Mykonos during the nineteenth century. An initial study of the data from 1849 was conducted by Giorgos Gassias, "Μύκονος: 1873" (talk at the presentation day of the DAM, Grypareio Cultural Centre, 12 May 2012).

mostly because of the decline of the shipping industry but also because of the growing economic crisis in Greece.⁴ In this historical circumstance, it can be suggested that the intensive excavations of the French School at Athens (École Française d'Athènes, EFA) on Delos, which took place from 1903 to 1913, were a catalyst for change, whose impact is still felt. According to this hypothesis, it seems that new economic processes emerged in this period, which would pave the way for further social transformations in the twentieth century.

The discovery and classification of the Municipal Archive of Mykonos (DAM) by the researchers and collaborators of the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation (IHR/NHRF) has created new prospects for a detailed and in-depth investigation of economic and social processes in Mykonos during the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁵ The study of documents related to the excavations on Delos can fill in research gaps in the history of the islands and answer questions posed by previous research on the French presence and its impact. Another recent important discovery were the almost complete accounting records of the Delos excavations at the archives of the EFA, which stemmed from the huge annual amount of 50,000 gold francs donated by the American philanthropist Joseph Florimond, duke of Loubat.⁶ Its study can shed light on unexplored aspects of the history of the excavations.

Historical Background and Research Questions

Mykonos can be viewed as an integral part of a small island complex that also comprises Delos and Rheneia (fig. 1). Delos, also called Small Delos (Μικρή Δήλος) by the Mykonians, is situated in the centre of the Cyclades and hosted one of the most important sanctuaries in antiquity, the panhellenic sanctuary of Apollo. Rheneia,

⁴ On the economic situation of the Greek state and the crisis of the late nineteenth century, see Georgios Dertilis, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού κράτους 1830–1920* (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2014), 603–24.

⁵ The DAM, discovered in 2009 and classified from 2009–2011, comprises documents and registers dating from 1834 to 1974, attesting to the activities of the municipality and the judicial authorities in this period. A full catalogue is available on the website of the National Hellenic Research Foundation. “Αρχειοθήκη Κυκλάδων,” NHRF, accessed 13 December 2021, <http://cyclades.eie.gr/nisia/mikonos/archiakes-diathesimotites/>.

⁶ The material was discovered in 2018 among nonclassified documents by EFA archivist Marie Stahl, after enquiries by the author and Gassias within the framework of the five-year (2017–2021) EFA research program “Les fouilles de Délos et la transformation de la société mykoniate (1873–1914)”. The accounts are gathered in voluminous files titled “Fonds Loubat” and organised by date.



Figure 1. Map of Mykonos and the Deles depicting the sites mentioned in the text (inset map shows the islands' location in the Cyclades). Google Maps, with additions by the author.

also called Big Delos (Μεγάλη Δήλος), was a burial place in antiquity after 426 BCE, when the Athenians removed all the graves from small Delos, declaring it unlawful to be born or die on the island henceforth.⁷ In more recent years, Rheneia has become a place for animal pasture, agriculture and fishing.⁸ It is important to emphasise that until shortly after World War II, Rheneia was inhabited permanently by families who practiced farming intensively.⁹ Both Delos and Rheneia are called the Deles (Δήλες) by the Mykonians. By the term “Mykonians” we refer to the island population of all three islands (Mykonos, Delos and Rheneia), unless otherwise stated.

⁷ For a general history and archaeology of Delos, see Panagiotis I. Hatzidakis, *Δήλος* (Athens: Latsis Group, 2003).

⁸ On the Deles and their importance to Mykonos society, see Despoina Nazou, “Η τουριστική Μύκονος και η αγροτική Ρήνεια σε αλληλοεμπλεκόμενες τροχιές: Μια ανθρωπολογική προσέγγιση,” in *Μελέτες και έρευνες για τη Μύκονο στις κοινωνικές και ανθρωπιστικές επιστήμες*, ed. Paris Klonaridis (Mykonos: Public Benefit Municipal Enterprise for the Cultural Development of Mykonos, 2009), 225–43.

⁹ Despoina Nazou, “Ανιχνεύοντας τις υλικές και συμβολικές μεταμορφώσεις του αγροτικού τοπίου στις Κυκλάδες: Η Μύκονος, ‘οι Δήλες’ (Ρήνεια), η αμφίσημη αγροτικότητα και τα σύμβολα της εντοπιότητας,” in *Πρακτικά 9ου Πανελλήνιου Συνεδρίου Αγροτικής Οικονομίας: Η οικονομία και η κοινωνία μπροστά στις νέες προκλήσεις του Παγκόσμιου Αγροτροφικού Συστήματος*, Αθήνα 2–4 Νοεμβρίου 2006, ed. Konstantinos Galanopoulos (Athens: Etaireia Agrotikis Oikonomias, 2006), 68–85.

The existence of farmsteads on Rheneia and Delos is attested in antiquity.¹⁰ In the Ottoman period the lands were divided in four lots, which were named “καπιτανίες”.¹¹ After the Greek Revolution, a unique system of communal land management of Delos and Rheneia was established, called *παρτίδες*. The term refers to land plots on the islands (80 on Rheneia, 9 on Delos) that were put up for auction by the Municipality of Mykonos and were rented to the highest bidder for the purposes of animal pasture and agriculture. In the National Assembly in 1843, the Mykonians successfully demanded that the Municipality of Mykonos would retain the management of the islands and that their cultivators would be exempted from the income tax rate of 25 percent.¹² In reality, and until the 1950s, the cultivators of the *παρτίδες* were poorer Mykonians, who gave a part of the harvest to the rich bidders in exchange for their use of the land. Land ownership on Mykonos and the Deles from the Greek Revolution onwards triggered competition within the community and could be used to exercise economic and social power. The formal role of the municipality was to regulate these relationships. In practice, however, the income from letting the *παρτίδες* was an important source of revenue for the municipality.

Gassias provides an early picture of the Mykonian economy in the mid-nineteenth century in his study of municipal electoral registers (*δημαιρεσιακοί κατάλογοι*) from 1844 to 1860 and of the national electoral register (*κατάστιχο βουλευτικών εκλογών*) from 1864 to 1865, which are located in the DAM.¹³ These catalogues represent a systematic recording of names, ages, dates of registration in the municipality, family status, professions and sums of direct taxes of islanders. The analysis of this data can lead to an interpretation of the function of the community in Mykonos within the Greek state after 1830. Gassias’ preliminary study describes a community in which wealth was concentrated in very few hands and where animal grazing was the primary source of income for rich Mykonians.

Hionidou’s studies on Mykonos in this period characterise the island’s economy as highly monetarised, since land and houses were bought and sold very frequently from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, and smallholding prevailed.¹⁴ Also, according to Harlaftis, Mykonos reached the

¹⁰ Hatzidakis, *Δήλος*, 24–25.

¹¹ Dimitris Dimitropoulos, *Η Μύκονος τον 17ο αιώνα: Γαιοκτητικές σχέσεις και οικονομικές συναλλαγές* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1997), 25–26.

¹² The decree was issued on 12 April 1844. See Hatzidakis, *Δήλος*, 101–2.

¹³ Gassias, “Μύκονος: 1873.”

¹⁴ Violetta Hionidou, “‘They used to go and come’: A Century of Island Migration from a Greek Island, Mykonos, 1850–1950,” *Annales de Démographie Historique* 104, no. 2 (2002): 53.

peak of its ship-owning activity in 1870, with 29 merchant sailing ships. What followed was a decline in Mykonian ship ownership, mainly due to the shift from sailing boats to steamboats and the gradual transfer of shipping activity to Piraeus.¹⁵ The decline of the shipping industry from the 1870s onwards put an end to the profits of those Mykonians involved in shipping business networks. Hionidou underlines the steady decline in population from 1861 to 1961 due to migration, even though there was an almost constant natural increase.¹⁶ She documents an increase in the share of farmers and manual workers, which is most likely associated with these economic developments. Given these conditions, we can safely assume that the prospect of wage labour would play an important role in economic and social aspirations. This was especially true for the young of the poorer strata, both male and female, who relied on the prospect of inheritance and dowries from their parents and did not have access to cash, which was retained by the elders of the household.¹⁷

From the beginning of the twentieth century there were new economic activities on the island, which created work opportunities: the French excavations on Delos and mining activities in Ftelia. From 1903 to 1913 the EFA received 50,000 francs a year in sponsorship from the American Joseph Florimond, duke of Loubat. This rich patron (fig. 2), born in New York to French



Figure 2. Picture of Joseph Florimond, duke of Loubat. EFA photographic archive.

¹⁵ Gelina Harlaftis, “Ναυτιλία,” in *Η ανάπτυξη της ελληνικής οικονομίας κατά τον 19ο αιώνα*, ed. Kostas Kostis and Sokratis Petmezas (Athens: Alexandria, 2006), 421–62.

¹⁶ For a summary of the available evidence with a bibliography, see Violetta Hionidou, “Nuptiality Patterns and Household Structure of the Greek Island of Mykonos, 1849–1959,” *Journal of Family History* 20, no. 1 (1995): 70.

¹⁷ Violetta Hionidou, “Marriage, Inheritance and Household Formation on a Greek Island, Mykonos (Mid-Nineteenth to Mid-Twentieth Century),” in *Inheritance Practices, Marriage Strategies and Household Formation in European Rural Societies*, ed. Anne-Lise Head-König and Peter Pozsgai (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 274–76.

parents and whose father was an inventor and businessman, funded most of the archaeological work on Delos. He was educated, a philanthropist and an antiquarian. Florimond funded Columbia University and several museums in America and Paris. Despite his substantial donation to the Delos excavations, Florimond never visited them. Loubat gave his annual donation on the condition that a detailed expenses account be kept.¹⁸ Moretti highlights the role of French archaeologist Georges Perrot in securing the Loubat donation.¹⁹ It is also possible that EFA director Théophile Homolle may have contributed; he and Loubat were most likely friends or at least respected one another.²⁰



Figure 3. Photo from the excavation works of the Granite Palaistra, where workmen are using a Decauville railway and wagons. Jean-Charles Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913: Εικόνες μιας αρχαίας πόλης που έφερε στο φως η ανασκαφή* (Athens: Melissa, 2017), 152, photo 131. EFA photographic archive.

¹⁸ For information on the history of the EFA's Delos excavations, see Jean-Charles Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913: Εικόνες μιας αρχαίας πόλης που έφερε στο φως η ανασκαφή* (Athens: Melissa, 2017), 49–56. The excavations are inextricably linked with the history of the EFA. A basic summary is provided in the EFA website (<https://www.efa.gr/who-are-we/from-1846-to-the-present-day>). The political connections among the EFA directors, the French ambassadors and the Greek politicians ensured the necessary permissions to conduct archaeological excavations as well as practical aid when necessary (as it will also be discussed below in the case of Mykonos).

¹⁹ Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913*, 36.

²⁰ The document highlighting the relationship between Homolle and Loubat was located by Vassiliki Zachari at the Institut de France (Ms 3868, unpublished report 2021 of the five-year research program, see n. 6). The relationship between Perrot, Florimond and Homolle deserves further investigation in order to understand how and why the donation was secured.

Loubat's donation led to very intensive excavations on Delos. About ten specialists and 200 workmen operated on site, where 3.5-kilometres of Decauville railway and 68 wagons were used to quickly remove the debris in order to reveal the ancient remains (fig. 3). In June 1906 the workmen even staged a strike, demanding better wages, working and living conditions. The Mykonians who worked on the excavation were workmen of the industrial era, since they were paid in cash and worked in a strictly defined framework of collective labour. At the same time as the intensive excavations on Delos, and in the context of a broader movement of metal prospecting and exploration by foreign, mainly French, mining companies in Greece, especially in the Aegean islands, mining engineers Spyridon Despozitos and Loudovikos Depian were granted permission initially to exploit the argentiferous lead deposits in the wider area of Ftelia, in the north of Mykonos.²¹ In 1901 about 150 workmen were employed in this mining activity, the direction of which was undertaken in 1910 by the French Mining Company of Lavrion (FMCL).²²

These new activities, namely working on the excavation, in mining and providing catering and lodging services to the French and other visitors to the islands, were more compatible with the concept of twentieth-century wage labour and created new earning opportunities for the Mykonians. Moreover, they were directed by people who were not part of the island's existing social ascendancy.²³ It can be argued that in a certain period in the early twentieth century almost all the active population of Mykonos turned rather suddenly to activities that had been unknown to them up to that point: archaeological excavations and mining. The economy of the island was changing, which gave rise to unprecedented social conditions.

²¹ Despozitos and Depian also founded and participated in various mining companies in Greece in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Despozitos served as British consul in Lavrion in the late nineteenth century. See Leda Papastefanaki, *Η φλέβα της γης: Τα μεταλλεία της Ελλάδας, 19ος–20ός αιώνας* (Athens: Vivliorama, 2017), 156–57.

²² Tryfon E. Evangelidis, *Η Μύκονος, ήτοι ιστορία της νήσου από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι των καθ' ημάς* (Athens: Vivliofoilia, 1996), 14–15.

²³ On the economy and society of Mykonos in previous periods, namely the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Dimitropoulos, *Η Μύκονος τον 17ο αιώνα*; Dimitropoulos, “Μύκονος 17ος–18ος αιώνας: Συνθήκες διαβίωσης των κατοίκων μιας νησιωτικής κοινωνίας,” in Klonaridis, *Μελέτες και έρευνες για τη Μύκονο*, 15–27; Dimitropoulos, “Το κοινό και τα ήθη: Μύκονος 18ος–19ος αι.: Σκέψεις με αφορμή τρία τεκμήρια,” in *Όψεις της ιστορίας της Μυκόνου στα νεότερα χρόνια*, ed. Dimitris Dimitropoulos (Athens: NHRF, 2018), 123–65.

The Municipality's Role as a Regulator of the Social Balance

People of diverse origins, status and identities were brought together on the occasion of the Delos excavations. Archaeologists from other countries, such as Denmark, also participated in the French mission (fig. 4), as did non-Mykonian Greek foremen (*επιστάτες*) whom the EFA employed to supervise the works. As far as the Mykonians are concerned, few were educated or wealthy enough to appreciate antiquities and the discipline of archaeology (a bright example being the numismatist Ioannis Svoronos). For most of the poor workmen, the excavation was their first contact with systematic archaeological excavation.²⁴



Figure 4. Photo of French and Danish researchers in the Hypostyle Hall (1909). Jean-Charles Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913: Εικόνες μιας αρχαίας πόλης που έφερε στο φως η ανασκαφή* (Athens: Melissa, 2017), 77, photo 14. EFA photographic archive.

²⁴ Kountouri et al. have published a rich body of archival data on the state of archaeology in Greece in the nineteenth century in *Περί τῶν ἀρχαιοτήτων ἰδίως: Ἡ ἀρχαιολογία στην Ελλάδα του 19ου αἰῶνα μέσα ἀπὸ τις πηγές του Ἀρχείου των Υπηρεσιῶν των Ἀρχαιοτήτων*, ed. Elena Kountouri, Stavroula Masouridi, Kalliopi Xanthopoulou and Athina Xatzidimitriou (Athens: Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2021).

Some very rare photographic evidence of daily life on the island survives from this period. For example, a photo dated to 1907 or 1908 depicting children at the port (fig. 5) subtly portrays existing economic and social differences in Mykonos at the time. None of the children are wearing shoes, except for the little girl in the centre, who is the famous writer Melpo Axioti (1905–1973). Axioti originated from a wealthy Mykonian family, who could afford shoes and good-quality clothes. Even though she was very young at the time of the Delos excavations, she was impressed by the coming and going of archaeologists, especially Stavropoulos, the Greek Ephor of Antiquities, whom she describes very vividly.²⁵



Figure 5. Children at Yialos, Hora. Panagiotis Kousathanas, *Ενθύμιον Μυκόνου: Σχόλια σε φωτογραφίες*, vol. 1, 1885–1950 (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 1998), 78, fig. 59.

The holdings of the DAM describe in detail the effects of the EFA excavations on Delos on Mykonian society and the municipality's handling of the new economic and social situation in its role as the local authority. Most of the wheat and barley grown on the islands were produced on the Deles, especially on Rheneia, where livestock was also kept and grazed.²⁶ The

²⁵ Hatzidakis, *Δήλος*, 113.

²⁶ Despoina Nazou, "Ανιχνεύοντας τις υλικές και συμβολικές μεταμορφώσεις του αγροτικού τοπίου στις Κυκλάδες: Η Μύκονος, 'οι Δήλες' (Ρήνεια), η αμφίσημη αγροτικότητα και τα σύμβολα της εντοπιότητας," in Galanopoulos, *Πρακτικά 9ου Πανελλήνιου Συνεδρίου Αγροτικής*

archaeological excavations on the Deles caused significant disturbance to traditional agropastoral activities, as well as to the communal land distribution as represented in the *παρτίδες* system, at least until the boundaries and uses of the archaeological sites were defined by law, and until these laws were accepted by the local community.

As early as 1866 the municipal council attempted to regulate the activities on Rheneia with several decrees, and there seems to have been debate on land use within the community, specifically regarding which lots would be used as fields for cultivation and which as pasture.²⁷ As mentioned above, the municipality put the *παρτίδες* up for auction (fig. 6) and rented them to the highest bidder. There is evidence of the disturbance caused by the excavations (both by the French as well as the Greek archaeologists) to the *παρτίδες* system. In 1900 lots were exempted from cultivation because of the presence of antiquities.²⁸ However, this was not a straightforward affair: following the assessment of

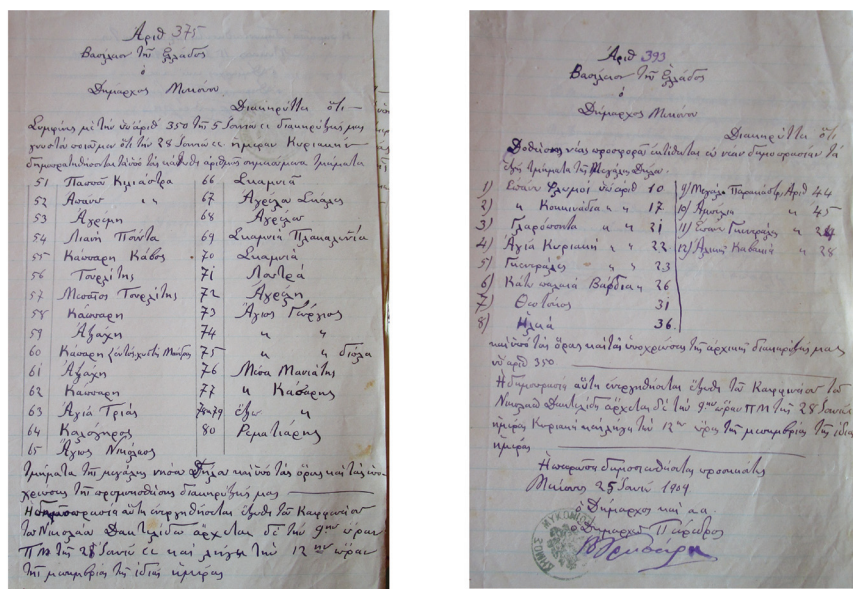


Figure 6. Two documents relating to the auction of the *παρτίδες*. The second document, in particular, attests that the auction could take place several times if a higher offer was made. Municipal Archive of Mykonos, DAM/A/359 A.

Οικονομίας, 71–72. An informant who held a *παρτίδα* on Rheneia attests that wheat and barley grown on Rheneia were sold to merchants from Syros and to the Fix brewery in Athens.

²⁷ DAM/B/11.

²⁸ DAM/A/331.

the Greek archaeologists Dimitrios Filios and Dimitrios Stavropoulos, the municipality calculated the loss in rental from the *παρτίδες*. The Syros prefect urged the municipality to comply with the archaeological law and settle the matter by issuing the relevant decrees through the municipal council.²⁹ Documents in other archives attest that the process of determining lots as archaeological sites was long and complex, since it required the involvement of several ministries (Interior and Religious Affairs and Public Education), the Syros Prefecture and the Municipality of Mykonos.³⁰ The excavated archaeological sites were eventually removed from the *παρτίδες*, but the actual space continued to be remembered and used by Mykonians. A characteristic example are the delicious melons that were planted in the Agora of the Italians, remembered nostalgically by the retired guards of the site.³¹

Other documents from the DAM highlight the role of the mayor as a regulator of issues related to antiquities and the excavations. Specifically, the mayor tried to communicate to the Mykonians the laws and rules of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education as well as impose them. The usual chain of command was that the minister communicated with the mayor through the prefect of the Cyclades, who was based in Ermoupoli, by letter and, for urgent matters, telegram. For his part, the mayor also communicated information to the prefect and the minister.

For example, a letter dated to 1872 from the mayor to the prefect informing him of the excavations in the Cave of the Dragon on Delos by Panagiotis Stamatakis and the French archaeologist Albert Lebègue (referred to as “Lombek”) and the most important finds (fig. 7). The letter echoes the excitement of finding important inscriptions related to the sanctuary. There is also very good documentation of the help offered by Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education Alexandros Koumoundouros to EFA director Homolle in order to conduct excavations on Delos, behind the back of the appointed supervisor, which reveals the internal tensions between Greek archaeologists and the

²⁹ For the existing archaeological laws at the time, see General Ephorate of Antiquities and Museums, *Συλλογή αρχαιολογικών νόμων, διαταγμάτων και εγκυκλίων, 1834–1905* (Athens: Ethniko Typografeio, 1892). The law was clear that antiquities should be declared to the state if discovered by chance, excavations should not be conducted without state permission, landowners who lost their land because of the presence of antiquities should be compensated by the state and the illicit trade of antiquities is forbidden. The penalties for breaking the law were severe.

³⁰ Dimitris Athanasoulis, *Κυκλαδικά στιγμιότυπα στη Δήλο: Από τα μνημεία και τους ανθρώπους τους* (Athens: Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades), 78–79.

³¹ Hatzidakis, *Δήλος*, 102.

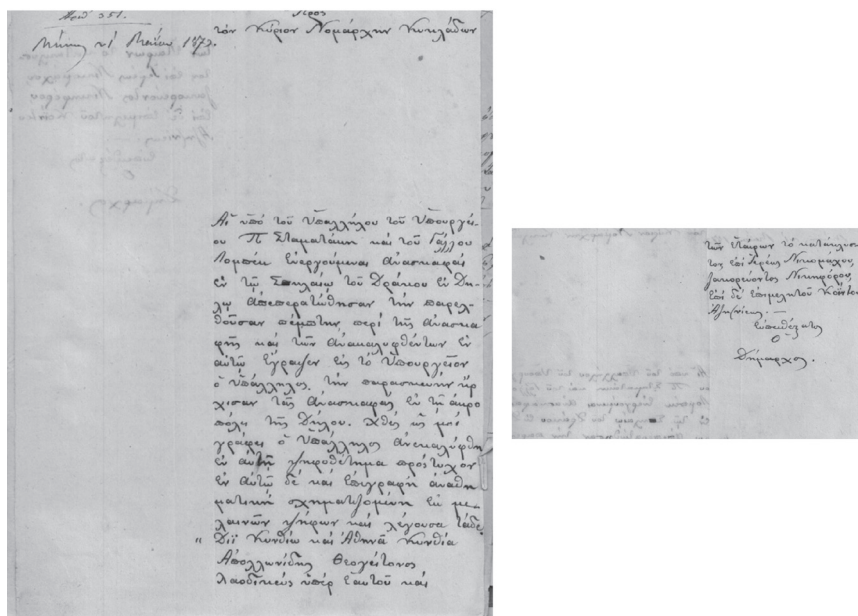


Figure 7. Letter from the Mykonos mayor to the Syros prefect informing him about the Delos excavations (1872). Municipal Archive of Mykonos, DAM/B/11.

minister (fig. 8). It is remarkable that it was the minister himself who informed the mayor about Homolle's arrival and activities in 1877.³²

In 1878 it is evident that the minister placed pressure on the mayor to implement the archaeological law on the safeguarding and transport of antiquities and to undertake the financial responsibility for all these activities.³³ The excavations on Delos continued in 1878, with regular reports and telegrams between the minister, the prefect and the mayor concerning the archaeological finds.³⁴ In addition, the excavation supervisor delivered written reports to the Ephorate of Antiquities and the municipality.³⁵ One document is particularly striking in terms of the involvement of Minister Theodoros Deliyannis with the particulars of the excavation. The minister himself informed the prefect by telegram that a map necessary for the excavations had been sent by post and he

³² DAM/B/11.

³³ DAM/A/81/2/9.

³⁴ DAM/A/65/9.

³⁵ DAM/B/11.

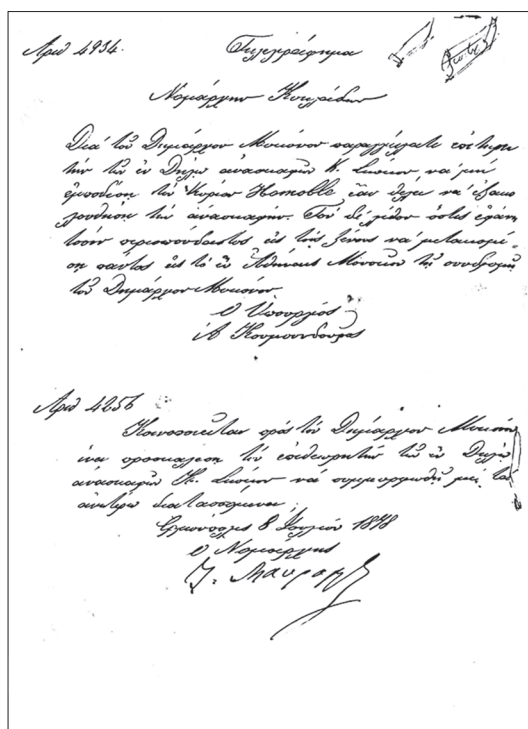


Figure 8. Telegram from the Minister of Religious Affairs and Education Koumoundouros to the Mykonos mayor via the Syros prefect ordering Skokos, the supervisor of the excavations, not to obstruct Homolle in conducting excavations on Mykonos. Municipal Archive of Mykonos, DAM A/65/9.

urged him to inform the dig supervisor by the mayor.³⁶ The French excavations on Delos were an important issue for the ministry, and the chain of command was followed meticulously.³⁷ In 1883, the French presence on Mykonos caused new tensions, when complaints were made about the flying of the French flag on the boat of Georgios Roussos, who was transferring the EFA representative from Delos to Mykonos.³⁸

In 1902, to mark the 25th anniversary of his research on Delos and in return for his services to the municipality, Homolle was declared an honorary citizen of Mykonos. Despite the tensions and problems that had come about, Homolle received the support of Mayor Michalis Kambanis, which is documented in an extensive speech before the municipal council at the ceremony to declare

³⁶ DAM/B/11.

³⁷ Athanasoulis published another early (1880) document from the ministry to the Syros prefect regarding the facilitation of the French excavations in *Κυκλαδικά στιγμιότυπα στη Δήλο*, 112–13.

³⁸ DAM/B/11.

him an honorary citizen on 12 August 1902.³⁹ Kambanis said the “illustrious and wise” Homolle had conducted the excavation “with success and great fame”. He spoke equally highly of the EFA and its members, who provided “many and precious services to Greek archaeological studies and, in general, Greek letters”. He also highlighted the importance of Delos and the sanctuary of Apollo in antiquity, whose history was revealed by the excavations. The benefits of the excavations to the community of Mykonos beyond their great scientific value were “too obvious that they do not need to be explained in detail”. The mayor’s speech touched on many interesting elements such as the perception of archaeology and antiquities at the time as well as the role of the EFA in the discovery of ancient Greece. It is clear that the mayor’s rhetorical intention was to convince Mykonians that Homolle, an outsider, had the right to become a Mykonian because of his archaeological activity. Since the French archaeologists were a distinct group of “others”, the ruling authority’s declaration of Homolle as an honorary citizen was an important symbolic gesture.⁴⁰

Concluding the evidence on the role of the municipality as the regulator of issues arising from the excavations, we can mention the appointment and termination of guards and their payments. It seems that the guards were paid directly by the municipality, which also was responsible for recruiting them, but the reasons for hiring and firing them are not clear.⁴¹ The plethora of correspondence on the guarding of Delos may reflect the concerns of the ministry, the ephorate and the municipality on the illicit antiquities trade that was in full bloom in this period. In terms of the actual documentation of these issues, in 1877 a boatman illegally transferred antiquities to Tenos by taking advantage of the absence of a guard on Delos and in 1880 Greek sailors removed antiquities, including an inscribed base, which was found on an English steamboat on Syros.⁴² Finally, the municipality, together with the ephorate, managed the collections of antiquities, which before the foundation of the museums of Mykonos and Delos were initially stored in rented

³⁹ The complete speech can be found in the minute book of the municipal council, 1898–1905.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the anthropological aspects of the Delos excavations and the concept of “others” as opposed to Mykonians, see Despoina Nazou, “Κληρονομιά αρχαιότητας και διαπολιτισμικές ‘συνοριακές ζώνες’ στο Αιγαίο: Η Δήλος και οι τουριστικές γενεαλογίες της,” in *Ταξίδια χωρίς προορισμό: Κριτικές προσεγγίσεις στις τουριστικές σπουδές*, ed. Despoina Nazou, Michalis Nikolakakis and Manolis Tzanakis (Athens: Nisos, 2022), 259–95.

⁴¹ For example, the appointment of Antonis Nazos in 1878 in DAM/A/65/9 or of Stephanos Polykandriotis in DAM/B/11.

⁴² DAM/B/11.

houses on Mykonos. The most important finds were transferred to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.⁴³

Working on the Delos Excavations (1903–1913)

In order to fully assess the economic and social impact of the excavations, it is necessary to clarify the identity and social status of the people who participated in the excavation. Equally, one should consider the organisation of labour and the determination of wages, as well as the social unrest the dig caused in the local society, which most likely reached its peak in June 1906, when the excavation workmen went on strike to demand better wages as well as improved working and living conditions. Photos from the period reveal some cultural information on the excavation workmen.⁴⁴ In several of the images, they are clothed in either the traditional trousers (βράκα) or European-style trousers; their clothes are always very worn and very rarely are they wearing shoes, even when they are excavating. Their poor clothing contrasts immediately with the impeccable uniforms and the pith helmets of the foreign archaeologists on Delos.

The most important information on the excavation workmen found so far derives from the archives of the EFA (Fonds Loubat), which contains a detailed record of their names and wages.⁴⁵ Not all the lists have survived, but an adequate sample from all years allows us to reconstruct the names and numbers of people employed as well as their wages.⁴⁶ By comparing this data with other information on wages in this period, the economic impact of the excavation can be clarified.

We can reconstruct in detail the way in which the excavation was organised, through the bookkeeping accounts of the huge donation towards the Delos excavations. The EFA director supervised the payments of the large sums required for the excavation, and there are several letters between him and the

⁴³ A collection that deserves further study comprises documents, such as the notarised lease of a building owned by Loukas Kokkolis in Hora to store the collection of antiquities in 1879. Another dated in 1887 describes the transfer of marble heads to the National Museum (both in DAM/B/11).

⁴⁴ For photos of Mykonos and the Mykonians in this period, see Panagiotis Kousathanas, *Ενθύμιον Μυκόνου: Σχόλια σε φωτογραφίες*, vol. 1, 1885–1950 (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 1998) and for photos of the workmen, see Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913*.

⁴⁵ The diaries of archaeologists and other researchers held at the EFA archives contain little information on how the excavation was run since they describe mostly the archaeological finds. The letters of the directors are of interest, since they highlight the networks of people active at the time, but they also mostly focus on the finds.

⁴⁶ The lists from 1913 are lacking; they may be in a folder that has not yet been discovered in the archive.

Bank of Athens, where the Loubat grant was deposited.⁴⁷ The documents of the Fonds Loubat are arranged in loose ledgers. The engineer Henri Convert and the foremen Charalambos Evgenidis and Sotiris Agious, whom the French trusted since they had collaborated with the EFA in the Delphi excavations, had an account in their name in 1903.⁴⁸ The names of the Greek foremen (Agious and Evgenidis) frequently appear on payment slips and other receipts, indicating that they were executing the orders of the person in charge (most likely Convert, who signed the payment slips). Interestingly, the foremen were not from Mykonos, so they can also be classified in the category of (non-Mykonian) “others”. Some of the stores where they purchased specialised equipment that could not be found on Mykonos were located in Athens and Syros.⁴⁹ The stores and businesses supplying the necessary materials and services for the smooth operation of the excavation form a truly international network.

In general, the way the excavation was organised was similar to a construction site, where workmen and materials were carefully documented. There is information on the transportation of workmen, equipment and supplies from Mykonos to Delos. A Decauville railway and wagons, French technological innovations that were used to move the debris from the trenches, were transported from Delphi, another French excavation, to Delos for the purposes of the new dig; the process of transportation and the related expenses is described.⁵⁰

The Delos lists of workmen provide a detailed record of names, wages, roles and the time that the workmen were employed in the excavation (fig. 9 and table 1). Only for these lists the workmen would have remained anonymous, unless one of their ancestors recognised them in the photos from the dig. The information was entered by hand on proforma lists.⁵¹ Most of the workmen were illiterate, since the majority signed their names with a cross next to their payment and only very few filled in their names next to their French transliteration. On the other hand, the foremen were certainly educated

⁴⁷ EFA archive, FL1904_Delos.

⁴⁸ EFA archive, FL1904_Delos.

⁴⁹ EFA archive, FL1904_Delos. There are receipts from shops in Athens for paper and from Syros for carpentry equipment, glass and fireworks (most likely for the celebration of the French national holiday on 14 July). The receipts from Paris further extend the network of shops from which specialised equipment was purchased (for example, photography materials).

⁵⁰ EFA archive, FL1904_Delos.

⁵¹ In some of the 1903 lists, the printed name of the excavation “Delphi” is erased and replaced in handwriting by the name “Delos”. This is a further indicator that the organisational system for the excavation was transferred from Delphi to Delos.

Ministère
de l'Instruction publique
et des Beaux-Arts

Ecole Française
à Athènes

Service des Fouilles de Delos

Exercice 1932

Feuille de Paie du 6 Juin 1912 au 22 Juin 1912

Emplacement	Nom de la partie prenante	Nature de la Dépense	Somme payée	Observations Rentes de journal et prix de l'unité
1	A. S. Chalkiadis	M. m. m. m.	25.00	9. Juin 2.30
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3	A. S. Chalkiadis		25.00	
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à Repéter

Figure 9. List of Mykonian workmen and their salaries, 6–22 June 1912. EFA archive, Fonds Loubat, folder 1904–.

or at least knew how to read and write, since they signed orders, invoices, payment slips and receipts. They had an important role in the running of the excavation; they translated and mediated between the French archaeologists and the Mykonian locals. In particular, on some of the lists, Sotiris and Amletos Agios were indicated as having the responsibility to ensure that the crosses next to the names of the workmen who were illiterate indeed correlated to the listed workmen.

The excavation lasted 11 years (1903–1913), running usually for six months, from May to October.⁵² Therefore, the workmen's occupation was seasonal yet resembled the employment pattern in Greek industry at the time.⁵³ In

⁵² Moretti attributes the termination of the intensive excavations on Delos to the termination of the Loubat donation in 1914, most likely due to the outbreak of World War I and the departure of Holleaux from the position of the EFA directorship. See Moretti, *Δήλος 1873–1913*, 36–38.

⁵³ According to Riginos' analysis of the data from the second industrial census (1920), only 68.18 percent of the food industry operated year round and seasonality was a general

approximate numbers, about 200 Mykonians worked and were paid in wages in 1905 and 1906, when the excavation reached its peak. The names of the people working as simple workmen are almost exclusively Mykonian (for example, Daktilidis, Gryparis, Xidakis, Monogios, Nazos, Kousathanas, Asimomitis, Zouganelis, Passas, Amorgianos, Syrianos and Stais). Given that these men originated from different families, as the variety of surnames indicates, these numbers could represent an important percentage of the active population on Mykonos.⁵⁴ The data on daily wages (table 2) is particularly important since it dates from such an early period (1903–1912); there is a paucity of similar published data from Greek excavations and Greek industry from this time.⁵⁵

Arguably, one of the most interesting and yet unexplained patterns evident in the daily wages of the EFA workmen is their large variation (table 3). In comparable data from the workmen employed by the Religious Affairs and Public Education Ministry in the repair of ancient remains on Delos in 1911, the standard workmen salaries was 3 drachmas per day, with only one workman paid 2 drachmas.⁵⁶ The variation in the EFA salaries could be related to several factors.⁵⁷ First, since no labour unions existed at the time and no official contracts were made, it is likely that the wage depended on one's bargaining skills; in this situation, literacy and education would be an advantage. Second, experience or age may have played a role; this is clearly recorded in the case of builders and carpenters, who had assistants, but not in that of simple workers.⁵⁸ Third, Agious imposed fines in the form of salary cuts in order to "discipline" the workmen (see below), in what was another reason for the wage variation.⁵⁹

characteristic of Greek industry in this period, which allowed or forced most of the Greek workforce to work elsewhere, mostly in agriculture. Michalis Riginos, *Παραγωγικές δομές και εργατικά ημερομίσθια στην Ελλάδα, 1909–1936: Βιομηχανία–βιοτεχνία* (Athens: Foundation of Research and Education of the Commercial Bank of Greece, 1987), 91–97.

⁵⁴ Hionidou estimates the de facto population of Mykonos in 1907 as 4,589. See Hionidou, "They used to go and come," 57, table 3.

⁵⁵ Riginos, *Παραγωγικές δομές*, 2.

⁵⁶ Archive of the Greek Ministry of Culture, Museum of Mykonos, Folder Delos, conservation of monuments, antiquities. Much fewer workmen (that is, about 15) were employed by the ministry).

⁵⁷ These factors are offered as hypotheses, to be further tested with the data through a detailed statistical analysis.

⁵⁸ The assistants to specialised staff were compensated with lower wages, but they were learning the trade.

⁵⁹ Hatzidakis, in *Δήλος*, 110, provides further data on the tampering of the daily wages. Apparently Agious noted the wages with pencil, so that he could change them later, but made the workmen sign in ink. This is indeed observed in the lists of the Fonds Loubat.

A final reason for this variation may be related to a workman's availability over a longer period of time; for example, non-Mykonian workers were usually listed on top of the lists, along with Agious, or in separate lists, and were paid monthly. Workmen from other areas were clearly a minority (there were no more than a dozen people with non-Mykonian names); they were most likely individuals who worked together with Agious in Delphi, and one, Amletos Agious, seems to have been a relative of his, sharing the same surname and also working as an overseer. These people may have been more eager to work every day and thus they were rewarded with higher salaries. Mykonians may have been more volatile, yet it is unclear why certain people were employed only for a few days in the month and others for more days or the whole month. It is unlikely that one could choose how many days to work in the dig; foremen most likely made these decisions. However, flexible arrangements may have appealed to the Mykonians should they have needed to tend to agricultural or other activities at certain times of the year. Certainly, since their work on the excavation was intense and seasonal, workmen had to make arrangements with other members of the household or relatives in order to combine their excavation work with traditional activities such as farming, herding and fishing. In any case, it is unlikely that working for a daily wage offered a sense of job security to the Mykonians.

The highest salaries and wages were paid to boatmen such as Antonis Passas and Pitarakis, the captain of the caique, who were hired to ferry all workmen from Mykonos to Delos, and back. Smaller boats were most likely used to move around Delos or for the French and the foremen to go back and forth to Mykonos, as documented in the archive in the form of smaller payments to boatmen as opposed to the large payments for the caique which did round trips. Mules and muleteers were also used for the transport of materials on the island; payments to muleteers were more standardised than other wages, though they occasionally varied from 5 drachmas to 5.5 and 6 drachmas per day. Skilled workmen such as smiths, carpenters and marble workers also received more standard daily wages, in the 5–6 drachma range.

The working conditions in the excavations were especially harsh, since the workmen laboured from dawn to dusk and they all lived together in a large storeroom.⁶⁰ It is likely that the hiring process was affected by politics, since Agious and Evgenidis recruited the men from Mykonos and were given the authority by the French to hire, pay them and fire them as they saw fit; the role

⁶⁰ Hatzidakis, *Δήλος*, 104.

of the Mykonos mayor in this procedure should not be underestimated.⁶¹ The workmen were displeased and this eventually led to the strike in June 1906. Their demands were for higher wages, the reduction of working hours and the improvement of their living conditions. The matter attracted public interest, with extensive coverage in the daily press and a related question in the Greek parliament.⁶² Strikes in Greece had occurred from the late nineteenth century.⁶³ The dramatic 1896 events in the Lavrion mines, when three miners died, served as a precedent. While the Lavrion miners wanted to achieve a daily wage of 3.5 drachmas, the unskilled workmen on Delos worked for much less a decade later.⁶⁴ The excavation diaries, held at the EFA archives, the strike is only mentioned as a reason for not working on those particular days.⁶⁵ Evidently, there was considerable distance between and a lack of communication among the French archaeologists, the foremen who had to deal with the crisis and the Mykonians.

A doctor, Matthaios Andronikos, was identified as the instigator of the strike by the Minister of Internal Affairs.⁶⁶ In an extensive reply to allegations published in the newspaper *Αθήναι*, he denied that he had instigated the strike, claiming it was a communal affair among the workmen, caused by their growing indignation at the low pay and the adverse working and living conditions on Delos.⁶⁷ Andronikos described the behaviour of the supervisor,

⁶¹ Hatzidakis, personal communication.

⁶² For the daily press coverage, see *Νέον Άστυ*, 6 June 1906; *Αστραπή*, 14 June 1906; *Αθήναι*, 21 June 1906 and 22 June 1906; *Σκριπ*, 22 June 1906; and *Ακρόπολις*, 23 June 1906 (all papers available in EFA archive FL_1906).

⁶³ Dimitrios Katsoridas, “Η σύνθεση της εργατικής τάξης στην Ελλάδα και το ζήτημα της συνδικαλιστικής εκπροσώπησης” (PhD diss., University of the Aegean, 2020), 114–21.

⁶⁴ Papastefanaki, *Η φλέβα της γης*, 242.

⁶⁵ The strike ran from Tuesday 5 June to Monday 18 June 1906. Courby’s diary, 1906, EFA archive.

⁶⁶ Matthaios’ brother Emmanuel (Manolis) Andronikos owned the Ygeia (“health”) pharmacy on Mykonos. There are several payment slips to the pharmacy for medicine for the Delos workmen in the EFA archive.

⁶⁷ According to Andronikos’ account of the events in the newspaper *Αθήναι* (21 June 1906), which he wrote on 15 June, the workmen declined to embark on the boat to Delos after the oral rejection of their demands for higher wages, fewer working hours and improved living conditions. They then went to Andronikos for advice; he advised them to put their complaints in writing. They then formed a committee and demanded to meet with Convert, with the intention of settling the affair locally. However, Convert did not want to meet with the committee, and he suggested that they should meet with Holleaux in Athens. Andronikos indeed went to Athens, where he was asked by Svoronos to discuss the matter with him, instead of Holleaux. Svoronos insisted that the demands of the workmen would be met, but the excavation on Delos should resume immediately; having been assured that the demands of the workmen would be met,

Sotiris Agious, as particularly inhumane, since he imposed fines on the workmen, resulting in cuts in their wages. He portrayed EFA director Holleaux as a harsh and unjust leader, as opposed to Homolle, another director, who was very popular on Mykonos. Conservative newspapers underlined the importance of the archaeological work being conducted by the French on Delos and argued that the strike was not universally agreed on by the workmen; the liberal press echoed Andronikos' arguments about workers' rights and the exploitation of poor Mykonians, who were not rebellious by nature, but were driven to strike by the hard and underpaid working conditions. There is no evidence to suggest that the French met the demands of the workmen; after the strike, Mykonians continued to work on the excavation for the same wages since they needed the money.

Conclusion

On the basis of the discussion of the evidence presented above, it can be argued that the EFA excavations on Delos had a profound economic and social impact on Mykonos. The participation in the archaeological excavations offered a large group of islanders, most notably poor young males, an opportunity to engage in wage labour. However, the unregulated work relationships gave rise to social tensions among the directors of the dig, the non-Mykonian foremen and the locals. The municipality tried to regulate the relationships of all the parties involved in order to ensure that laws were followed but also that archaeological activities would not disturb the bidding for the *παρτίδες* and the economic benefits stemming from the land management on the Deles.

Hionidou has highlighted the significant presence of outsiders on Mykonos in the published census data for 1907, for which she offers no apparent explanation.⁶⁸ The archaeological excavations and the economic activities related to them, together with mining at Ftelia, could well explain this pattern in the census, given the high number of in-migrants attracted to the islands by these activities. The economic importance of mining at Ftelia should be further evaluated, but its contemporary potential may be inferred from its description

Andronikos sent a telegram to Mykonos in order for the excavation to continue. On his return to Mykonos, he assured the workmen that their demands would be met, so they returned to work on Delos. However, street posters were later printed and erected (most likely by the foremen) on the order of Covert, who was representing Holleaux, stating that unless the workmen returned to work on the same wages, the EFA would cease the excavations.

⁶⁸ Hionidou, "They used to go and come," 55. In 1907, 228 in-migrants were recorded in the census, 160 of which were born outside the Greek state, and 68 within it.

as the primary product of the island in the widely circulated *Κυκλαδικόν Ημερολόγιον*.⁶⁹

This current study offers some more general observations in terms of insularity. Mykonos is a Mediterranean island that combines two different dynamics. It is considered a typical example of a small Cycladic island, where until the 1950s the daily life of its inhabitants was characterised by the traditions of the agropastoral economy and society. However, the central geographic place of Mykonos and the Deles favoured external connections, and since antiquity the islands were part of broader political structures, alliances and empires. The community's adaptation to the wider macro-historical changes in each period and the active reinvention of economic and social institutions are remarkable. Especially in the period under examination, the turn of the twentieth century, it seems that Mykonian society managed to overcome the economic crisis by engaging in new economic activities (mining, archaeology) and circular migration, therefore adapting to the changes brought about by the long and unstable transition from the agropastoralist lifestyle to the modern economy. The archaeological activities on the islands played an important role in this process, both in the short term by providing work to the locals as well as in the long term, eventually leading to the growth of tourism.⁷⁰

This study followed a micro-historical approach to investigate the economic status of the poorer strata of Mykonian society, the excavation workmen, who, until the discovery of the bookkeeping accounts of the Fonds Loubat, were condemned to anonymity, in contrast to the French and Greek archaeologists and politicians of this period (ministers, prefects, consuls and mayors). The evidence presented, especially when complemented by the demographic data provided by Hionidou about the structure of the Mykonian family from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, can further highlight the characteristics of the labour force of Mykonos, which cultivated the land, grazed livestock and dug the earth in order to reveal the ancient town of Delos.

By and large, previous approaches on the history of Mykonos and the Delos excavations did not follow a micro-historical approach; they focused mainly the ruling class, highlighting the names and actions of French and Greek archaeologists but overlooking the important contribution of Mykonian workmen, who were greater in numbers and carried out most of the excavation

⁶⁹ Nikolaos Kotsovillis, "Γεωγραφικά: Τοπογραφία των Κυκλάδων Νήσων," *Κυκλαδικόν Ημερολόγιον* 1908: *Ιστορία, Τοπογραφία, Ηθογραφία, Αρχαιολογία των Κυκλάδων Νήσων*, 24.

⁷⁰ Despoina Nazou, "Οι πολλαπλές ταυτότητες και οι αναπαραστάσεις τους σ' ένα τουριστικό νησί των Κυκλάδων: Έπιχειρηματικότητα και 'εντοπιότητα' στη Μύκονο" (PhD diss., University of the Aegean, 2003), 43.

work. We hope that this study will motivate researchers to move beyond the history of archaeologists and discoveries to the history of local societies and the economic and social effects of archaeological excavations. Researching the role of the Mykonian labourers and understanding their living conditions is essential to fully unravel the historical events in this period and the gradual changes that occurred in the economy and society of Mykonos from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

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Table 1
Table of daily salaries of specialised labour in the excavation from 1903–1912 (in drachmas)

Role	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Workmen supervisor		4	4, 5		4	3, 5	5			
Smith	6	3.5	3.25, 3.5, 5	3.5, 4		5	4, 5			
Smith (aid)		1.5					3	2.5	2.5, 2.75	
Carpenter	5	5, 6	4.5, 5, 6			5, 6	5		5	6
Carpenter (aid)			2							
Sculptor (marble)									4, 6	
Painter			5				3.5			
Builder	4, 5, 6	5, 6	5, 6	6	6	5, 6	6	5	5, 5.50, 7	
Builder (aid)		2, 3.5	1.5, 2.25, 3.25	2	2, 2.5	1.5, 2, 2.5, 3	2.5, 2.75	3	1, 2	
Mule driver	6–6.5	6	6	5.5, 6	5.5	5.5	5, 5.5	5.50	5, 5.5	5.5

Source: Data is taken from the EFA archive (Fonds Loubat).

Table 2
Table of roles in the excavation as documented in the payment lists,
1903–1912

Role	Year
General supervisor	1903–1912
Workman supervisor	1903–1909
Workman	1903–1912
Builder	1903–1911
Assistant builder	1905–1911
Smith	1903–1912
Assistant smith	1904, 1909–1912
Carpenter	1903–1905, 1908–1909, 1911–1912
Marble sculptor	1911
Painter	1905, 1909
Conservator	1910–1912
Muleteer	1903–1912
Guard	1912
Maid	1910–1912
Boatman	1903–1911
Caique captain	1903–1912

Source: Data is taken from the EFA archive (Fonds Loubat).

Table 3
Table of variation documented in workman daily wages (drachmas),
1903–1912

Daily wage	Year									
	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
1									x	
1.25							x			
1.5	x	x	x			x			x	
1.75	x									
2		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.25	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
2.5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.75	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3.25		x						x	x	x
3.5	x	x	x				x			
3.75		x								

Source: Data is taken from the EFA archive (Fonds Loubat).