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The Klithí Project: An Archaeological Perspective on Aristi in its Wider Setting

by

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Introduction

This is a short history of the Klithí project, which extended over a period of nearly two decades, and of the relationship between our archaeological activities, the local community and changing events in the wider world. It is a personal account of the key events and social encounters that led to my own involvement in archaeological research in Epirus, the discovery of the Klithí rockshelter and the establishment of the Klithí project, the challenges of organising the fieldwork, and my reflections on the wider social context and significance of the archaeological work.

Excavations at Klithí ran from 1983 to 1988, with preliminary visits to the Voïdomatis area and other regions in Epirus from 1979 to 1982 to lay the foundations of the project, and further annual visits between 1989 and 1992 to complete our studies of the material, culminating in an international conference in Ioannina in 1994 (ICOPAG, published in Bailey et al. 1999) and the final publication of our project results in 1997 (Bailey 1997). The focus of the project was the excavation of the Klithí rockshelter itself, but the work also included investigation of two other rockshelters in the lower reaches of the Voïdomatis Gorge, Boïla near the mouth, and Megalakkos in a small side valley upstream of Klithí. The project also involved extensive travel on foot and by car in the Zagori and further afield in the Epirus region to study the geology, environmental history, and archaeology of the wider landscape.

The Klithí rockshelter is located within the village territory of Klithonia, but because the easiest access is from the Aristi end of the valley, we came to know Aristi better than any of the other local villages. We also got to know people in Klithonia, Agios Menas and Vikos, villages close enough to have an interest in Klithí and the area around it. During the excavation seasons we established a field camp deep in the Voïdomatis valley close to Klithí, where we lived and worked during the summer field season. We also rented a house in Aristi for storage and specialist studies of the finds from excavation. Our team grew to include a large number of visiting specialists and students from many parts of the world, including a growing contingent of Greek colleagues and students. The result was a steady flow of traffic through the village and frequent visits to the Aristi tavernas – Alexandra's at the entrance to the village, Michalis with his shop in the village square and the only public telephone, and the Zisis family establishment further down the hill.

[1] This is the original English text. The published version is the Greek translation, translated by Faidon Moudopoulos Athanasiou

We also witnessed the local impact of wider changes in the world at large, including the growth of tourism, the opening of the borders with Albania and eastern Europe after the collapse of the USSR, and the expansion of conservation work by the Vikos-Aoos National Park, all of which, like our own archaeological activities, have left their mark on the physical and social landscape. What may not be apparent to the modern reader is that our work was conducted in the pre-digital era, with no mobile phones, no laptop computers, no GPS, no satellite imagery and few maps of any sort.

Setting the Archaeological Scene

The earliest dated evidence for human presence in the Voïdomatis catchment is at the mouth of the main gorge on the edge of the Konitsa plain near the old bridge of Klithonia. Here, 25,000 years ago, people camped on the bank of the river, probably a small hunting party tracking red deer. Traces of their fireplace and remains of a meal (a flint artefact and the jawbone of a red deer) were covered by thick layers of river silt when the river flowed at a higher level than today. This was during the coldest period of the last glacial, when permanent snow and ice remained all-year on the peaks of Mt. Tymphi, and the upper reaches of the Voïdomatis River and the mountain slopes would have been too bare of vegetation and unproductive to attract animals and their human hunters. The river silt protected these remains for thousands of years until the river level dropped in more recent times and cut through the old sediments to expose the ancient remains.

Entry into the Voïdomatis valley did not take place until 20,000 years ago, the earliest date we have for the occupation of the Klithí rockshelter. This was a time of global warming and people came in spring and summer to hunt the wild goats and chamois that would have lived in large numbers on the surrounding crags and mountain slopes. They moved west and south to warmer lowlands during the winter and continued this pattern of regular seasonal visits for about 4000 years. After 16,000 years ago, continued global warming saw the expansion of forests within the valley and the shift of goat and chamois habitats to higher altitude. Klithí ceased to be an attractive base, and largely fell out of use apart from occasional visits in later millennia.

During its period of main use, activities at Klithí were focused around a large hearth area at the back of the shelter, and thousands of broken and burnt animal bones accumulated in the surrounding deposits and an equally large number of small flint artefacts mostly made by flaking pebbles collected from the nearby riverbed. Frost-shattered stones and soil from the roof of the shelter and the cliff above steadily accumulated to cover and protect this material. The animal remains are dominated by ibex and chamois. Very small quantities of bones from, birds, fish, hare and beaver suggest additional resources, and plant foods were probably exploited but have left no surviving trace. Small numbers of bone tools were recovered, such as awls, spatulae and needles, some with carved designs. Decorative items consisted of marine shells and the canine teeth of red deer, deliberately pierced with small holes to make necklaces or pendants. Both demonstrate contacts with a wider area extending as far as the coast. We can imagine a small group of people, perhaps an extended family or small group of families, living in the rockshelter, eating the meat of wild goat and chamois, perhaps smoking and preserving some of the meat for later use, working the bones into useful implements, preparing the skins for clothing, and stocking up with supplies to take with them when they departed for their winter quarters.

Beginnings in Epirus

"What do you think of Margaret Thatcher?" At least I think that is what I understood the Greek goatherd to be asking after several emphatic repetitions of a word that did not sound like any Greek that I knew but rather like 'thatcher'. This is not a question you expect to be asked in a remote valley of the Pindus Mountains. It was a hot afternoon in early August 1979, and my very first visit to the Zagori region of north-west Greece. We had entered the mouth of the Voïdomatis Gorge along a

narrow path intending to walk upstream in search of Palaeolithic rockshelters, and had disturbed a herd of goats resting in the shade by the river under the watchful eye of two fierce-looking guard dogs. The goatherd, whose name we later learned was Michalis Kaltsounis, had appeared to find out the cause of the disturbance. I attempted to ask him in my rudimentary Greek where he took his goats in winter. No doubt my question seemed as bizarre to him as his question to me. Since this was three months after Margaret Thatcher's election as Britain's first woman Prime Minister, and my fragmented Greek no doubt identified me as an Englishman, the concept of "thatcher" seemed a likely topic of mutual interest. To understand this strange juxtaposition of Stone Age archaeology, the seasonal movements of goats, and British politics, we must go back 14 years to 1965.

In that year, the BBC screened a television programme, *The Springs of St. George*, about the work of the Cambridge archaeologist Eric Higgs and his research in Epirus: https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b77156117. Higgs had come to Greece in 1962 to search for the Palaeolithic archaeology of Greece, until then almost unknown, and had been rewarded with discoveries in Epirus in the Louros Valley at Kokkinopilos, a strange landscape of bare and heavily gullied red sediments on the edge of the Arta plain, and at the nearby rockshelter of Asprochaliko, an opening in a limestone cliff overlooking the Louros River. As we now know, these finds take the human history of the region back to over 100,000 years ago. The springs in the title of the programme were known to the Romans, who built an aqueduct across the Louros River and a tunnel beneath Kokkinopilos to channel water to the new city of Nikopolis, built 30 km away on the coast by the Emperor Augustus to celebrate his victory over Anthony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC.

As a teenage schoolboy, I had seen this television programme, and it had captured my imagination, drawing a compelling picture of the connections between the activities of an archaeological expedition, a landscape with traces of Classical and even more distant Stone Age inhabitants, and traditional village life in a remote and isolated corner of Greece.

Thanks to the peculiarities of the English educational system, I had specialised from an early age in ancient Greek and Latin and the history of Greece and Rome and had an interest in archaeology and an ambition to visit Greece. The following year I was offered a place at Cambridge University to study archaeology and anthropology and planned to take a year off to earn some money and travel abroad to see something of the wider world. Why not contact Higgs to find out if he was still working in Epirus and if I could volunteer to spend the summer working on his project?

So it was that I was told to report with my backpack and sleeping bag to 35 Panton Street, Higgs's home in Cambridge, in June 1967, to join one of the dig vehicles for the drive across Europe. As I walked from the railway station and turned into Panton Street, my heart sank at the sight of a blue Bedford van, with two pairs of feet protruding from underneath the front bumper. These belonged to two of Higgs's postgraduate assistants, Michael Jarman and Paul Wilkinson, and did not bode well for the condition of the vehicle. As more and more equipment emerged from the Higgs house, and more volunteers gathered on the pavement outside, we wondered how we would all fit inside the van. In the event there were eight of us including Jarman as the sole driver. Higgs travelled separately in his own Landrover with his second wife, Helen, two small children and a nursing assistant. The two vehicles travelled down to Dover and took the same car ferry across the English Channel, but once we disembarked in France we did not expect to travel together or meet up again until arrival in Ioannina. Higgs had a heart condition, took life at a steady pace and rarely drove his Landrover faster than 60 kph, so we expected to arrive well before him.

Europe was a very different place then from now: different passport controls and currencies for every country we passed through; no motorways except in Germany; dangerous driving conditions especially travelling through Yugoslavia; no mobile telephones or GPS; and different disease

environments in the hotter climates of SE Europe (we were warned to expect stomach troubles such as diarrhoea and dysentery) – in short, no European Union in any sense of the term as we have become used to it in the early 21st century. We drove all day, turning off the main road in the early evening to find some remote layby or corner of a field where we cooked our evening meal over a small portable gas stove and slept on the ground. The expedition had limited funds, and Higgs was notorious for running operations on a shoe-string budget with student volunteers, long days of hard labour and limited food supplies.

Our road trip across Europe was full of incident, of mishaps, detours, car breakdowns, and encounters with startled locals, suspicious police patrols, and incredulous car mechanics. A vehicle crammed with scruffy young Brits was a rarity in those days. The vehicle had been heavily used in the previous years' field expeditions and was not in the best condition, even without its extra load. The brakes started giving trouble in Germany, compounded by a tyre puncture and a detour to Augsburg for the first of many visits to garages for repairs. Eventually, Jarman stopped the vehicle at the top of a mountain pass in Austria, turned to us and said with a grin that the brakes wouldn't stop us on the downhill descent. A breakdown truck was summoned and towed the car down to the valley below, while the rest of us walked. Temporary garage repairs saw us on our way as far as Innsbruck, where the mechanic memorably declared: 'It is utter madness to drive a vehicle in such condition across Europe'. We progressed slowly and fitfully through northern Italy and eventually onto the long, straight roads of the Yugoslav 'autoput'. By the time we reached the border between southern Yugoslavia and Greece we seemed at last to be entering a more remote and exotic world with isolated villages scattered across mountain landscapes patrolled at night by half-wild sheep dogs who sniffed around our sleeping bags. Further garage stops for repairs followed in Thessaloniki.

In those days, the only land route into Epirus was from Thessaly over the Metsovon Pass, and even that was challenging because of the unmetalled road surface and temporary repairs to damage caused by the storms of the previous winter. Members of our party who had driven the same route the previous year breathed a sigh of relief once we had got past these hazards.

Eventually we straggled into Ioannina more than a week after departure to meet a grim-faced Higgs, who had arrived long before us, and was planning to send out SOS messages to the emergency services across Europe to watch out for our vehicle in case we had come to grief in some horrific road accident. Without further ado, we were despatched to work in one of the expedition field camps on the bank of the Louros River under the shadow of the Roman aqueduct, where we lived and worked in the open and spent long days drawing flint artefacts from the previous years' excavations. Eventually, I was allowed to move to the other field camp in a field outside Ioannina to spend a week working at the excavation of the Kastritsa Cave on the edge of Lake Pamvotis, a newly discovered site where Higgs had begun excavations the previous year.

Such was my introduction to the nomadic life and rough living conditions of summer fieldwork, Cambridge style.

Higgs had been a sheep farmer for many years before training as an archaeologist and had a keen eye for landscapes, animals and agricultural practices. In the early 1950s, shortly before going to Cambridge to begin his studies as a mature student, he travelled across Europe through Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey in a camper van with his first wife and family friends (Osler 1957). They encountered the Vlachs of the eastern Pindus but were unable to travel west into the Zagori because the Metsovon route was closed on that occasion. Higgs was fascinated by the transhumant life of the Vlachs and the Sarakatsani. Later in his career, when he began fieldwork in Epirus, he saw similarities between the movements of sheep between the coastal lowlands of Epirus and summer pastures in the Pindus mountains and the movements of Stone Age hunters following herds of wild animals

between their seasonal grazing territories. As a student at Cambridge, I was exposed like many others to his lectures on early agriculture, animal domestication and the importance of seasonal movements. Hence my question, many years later, to Michalis the goatherd.

In the 1960s, the Zagori was hardly accessible to outsiders because of poor roads and military restrictions. Higgs made at least one brief visit to the area with Sotiris Dakaris, the Ephor of Ioannina and later Professor of Archaeology at the University, and he recorded a rockshelter site near Konitsa on the main road close to the mouth of the Voïdomatis Gorge. However, it was to be more than a decade before archaeologists returned to the area.

Return to Epirus and the Discovery of Klithí

My imagination had been fired by this first experience of archaeological field work, by the history and archaeology of the Epirus region with its mountainous landscapes and its mix of Stone Age, Classical, Byzantine and Ottoman remains. But 1967 was to be Higgs's last field season in Epirus. With problems over permits, the political situation in Greece, and other distractions, Higgs and his original team dispersed to conduct fieldwork elsewhere in Europe and the Near East, and my own archaeological interests took me to other parts of Europe and Australia. It was only when I was appointed to a lectureship in Cambridge in 1976 after Higgs's death that my thoughts turned back to Epirus. It was clear that there was a large archive of unpublished material left over from the Higgs era, an obligation to complete what he had begun, and an opportunity to start a new project.

In 1979, with Pat Carter, Clive Gamble and Helen Higgs, I returned to Epirus to re-examine the large collection of artefacts from the Higgs excavation in the Ioannina Museum, to re-visit the sites discovered by Higgs and to assess the prospects for a new field project. It was Pat Carter, who had been with Higgs in his earliest expeditions, who suggested that we explore the Aoos and Voïdomatis river valleys emerging from the mountains near the Albanian border. So it was that he and I took our Landrover north from Ioannina on the afternoon of 2 August and parked near the old bridge of Klithonia. After our encounter with Michalis and his goats at the mouth of the Voïdomatis Gorge, we pressed on upriver past steep cliffs and river rapids alternating with calm eddies and shady, trout-filled pools. Soon the valley opened out into a broad grassy terrace shaded by plane trees, which later became the camp for the Klithí excavation team. On a rocky spur nearby, we found a small Byzantine chapel dedicated to the Holy Cousins, the Agii Anargyri, St. Damian and St. Kosmas, next to the ruins of a small monastery. Over this charmed scene loomed the spectacular cliffs of Astraka, the Towers of Papingon that guard the entrance to the Vikos Gorge, gleaming white in the distance. Around the next bend we were greeted with the sight of a large rockshelter opening at the base of a cliff a little way above the footpath. The site was clearly in use as a winter shelter for goats, with a wall and brushwood fence to keep the wolves out, a lean-to hut with a tin roof built against a fire-blackened rock wall, and a layer of goat dung covering the floor (Figure 1). On the slope below, we found Palaeolithic flint artefacts eroding out from the soil. This must surely be a priority for any future work – a large site in a very different location from the Higgs sites, and close to the summer territory of his proposed transhumant routes. We hurried back to Ioannina and brought the other team members out for a subsequent visit to investigate the area and spent our first night camping out on the terrace close to the site.

Excavations at Klithí

Finding a site worth excavation is one thing. Getting permission to excavate is quite another. A State permit issued by the Greek government and allocated on a strict quota to the Foreign Schools (the British School at Athens in our case) is essential, together with the agreement of the landowner. You would not think that a limestone cliff would involve such a complicated process of negotiation. In fact, it took many visits and meetings over a period of four years before we were able to begin the excavation.

We discovered that the site is called Klithí, meaning the key, on land within the village territory of Klithonia, meaning the keyhole. The original village of Klithonia, then mostly abandoned, is high on the mountain above Klithí, but the modern village is on the Konitsa plain. However, the grazing rights around the rockshelter were owned by the Church and administered by the Metropolitan Bishop of Konitsa, who rented out the use of the rockshelter to a goatherd family from the village of Vikos, far up the river in the opposite direction from Klithonia, and the easiest access to the site was over land belonging to Aristi. As a rockshelter, the site fell under the jurisdiction of two different branches (Ephorates) of the Greek Antiquities Service: the regional Ephorate of Ioannina, and a recently established Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology with national responsibilities and its headquarters in Athens. Both would likely have to give their permission. The Church was uneasy about transferring land under its ownership to the Greek state as the law required if the site proved to have significant archaeological remains, especially with the election of the new Socialist Government (PASOK) in 1981. And the new Minister of Culture with ultimate responsibility for antiquities was Melina Mercouri, who at that period was engaged in a war of words with the British government about the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum. Four village authorities, two Greek government agencies, the Greek Orthodox Church, and national and international politics, all to be negotiated or approached for permits, permissions and help of various sorts! The scope for getting caught up in a complex web of political in-fighting and competing local, national and international interests looked unpromising.

To add a further complication, we knew that Eric Higgs had made enemies in his time because of the way he ran his projects in the 1960s, and I was warned that some of that hostility might affect me as his Cambridge successor. As an older man with a chronic heart condition, Higgs was a man in a hurry, with little time for bureaucratic rules, time-consuming diplomacy in Athens, or the archaeological 'establishment'. I also knew that there were boxes from his fieldwork in the Cambridge stores containing animal bones and stone artefacts from his excavations, which he had clearly brought back to England 'unofficially' (all of which we eventually returned to the Ioannina Museum during the Klithí project). By 1964 Higgs had been doing fieldwork for three years in Epirus, and his application for a permit to continue excavation at Asprochaliko in 1965 was turned down by the British School, probably on the grounds that he should take a break from excavation, complete the study of the finds already recovered, and make way for another British expedition to obtain one of the small number of available excavation permits. Using his Cambridge connections, Higgs secured a letter from Sir Mortimer Wheeler to the Chairman of the British School at Athens, demanding an excavation permit (Wheeler, 1964). Wheeler at that time was Secretary of the British Academy, responsible for funding the British Schools overseas, and the most powerful man in British archaeology. Higgs got his permit. Little wonder that he left a trail of resentment. We were determined to do things differently.

During summer visits in 1980–1982, we spent more time organising and studying the collections in the Ioannina Museum, encouraged the participation of Greek students interested in Palaeolithic archaeology, and discussed our plans with the archaeological authorities in Ioannina and Athens. We got to know the different villages around Klithí, sat in the tavernas, especially Alexandra's at the entry to Aristi with its panorama looking out over the cliff tops of the Voïdomatis Gorge, and got to know some of the local people.

We also walked over much of the surrounding terrain to gain a better knowledge of the landscape. On one occasion Eugenia Adam, John Gowlett and I walked from the modern village of Klithonia on the Konitsa plain up to the abandoned village high above Klithí. There we met Nikos Koungoulis, goatherd and former tenant of Klithí, who still spent his summers with his family and his animals in the old village. He gave us directions for the direct route down to Klithí, but we soon lost our way amongst steep goat paths that all seemed to end in a prickly bush or at a cliff edge. Our shouts summoned

Michalis, the fan of Margaret Thatcher, from down below, who guided us down a near-vertical scree slope to the safety of the path by the river. On another occasion we hiked up the mountain to the Gamila mountain peak, meeting on the way shepherds with their flocks on the summer pastures high above Papingon.

In that year we also had our first meeting with Metropolitan Sebastian, who was unwilling to commit himself in writing but agreed to give our project informal support provided that we build an alternative shelter for the tenant goatherds and secure the agreement of the Greek Ministry. Further meetings followed at Vikos with the Metropolitan's representative and the tenant goatherds, Trifon Dinoulis and his son Kostas.

The Klithí Excavations

By the summer of 1982, we were ready to begin, but we had to wait another year for our turn in the queue for a British School permit. Our funds, though better than in Higgs's day, were limited at the beginning. We could not afford to stay in hotels, even if they had existed within reasonable distance, nor could we find local houses or rooms for rent that were suitable for our needs. The Klithí site was inaccessible except on foot, involving a 45-minute walk from the mouth of the Gorge. There was a shorter route from the village of Agios Menas opposite Klithí, but this involved a steep path, and we would then have to wade across the river. The nearest vehicle access was from the village of Aristi but still required a 20-minute walk along a narrow and rocky path over land belonging to Aristi. Spiros Koungoulis, our main contact at Klithonia, was a road contractor and offered to bulldoze a new road into the valley, but we ruled that out on grounds of cost and environmental damage. Wherever we stayed, we would have a long trek to carry materials and equipment to and from the site, so we decided to camp by the river near Klithí and enter the valley on foot from the nearest road access on the Aristi-Papingon road.

That meant we would have to carry all our supplies into the camp. But living and cooking our meals in the open was a familiar summer fieldwork routine, and the location could hardly be more ideal – a broad and grassy terrace, very close to Klithí, well shaded with trees, and with ample firewood. Nearby, there was a small spring for freshwater, and the river emerged icy cold from its source only a short distance upstream and could be used for bathing and even for drinking, and as a natural refrigerator for perishable food. Few outsiders came through that part of the valley, only Michalis with his goats (Figure 2), occasional locals from Agios Menas who came down in the evening to fish for trout and perhaps to take a closer look at our strange encampment, and very rarely a foreign hiker heading for the Vikos Gorge. Perhaps there was also a thought in our minds that by living outdoors in this way, we might come a little closer to appreciating the way of life of the people who lived at Klithí many thousands of years earlier.

With memories of being a hungry undergraduate student on summer fieldwork under the Higgs regime, my only stipulation was that we should hire a full time cook and keep our team well fed. It is not difficult to persuade people in England to give up their time in return for a free trip on a summer expedition to Greece. In fact, we were lucky with all our cooks, who came in successive seasons. Some of them were professionally trained chefs, and two, Helen Kloosterman and Roz Mason were from Australia and New Zealand, working their way round Europe and only too happy for some outdoor adventure and the challenge of cooking over an open fire for a team of archaeologists. Roz, an unflappable and resourceful New Zealander, came two years in succession, in 1986 and 1987, took everything in her stride with however many people might be in camp at any one time, sometimes as many as 20 or 25 individuals, turned out a varied menu of food cooked over an open fire to keep us well fed, and even succeeded on one occasion in baking a fruit cake (Figure 3).

I was the first to arrive in 1983, with a student assistant from Cambridge and a Peugeot van full of equipment, followed soon after by Derrick and Joan Webley in their own car and Helen Higgs. We parked our vehicles and spent a few days camped under the trees near the bridge over the river on the Aristi-Papingon road. At that time, very few people came down to that spot and we had the place to ourselves. Little by little we carried our gear along the goat path into the main campsite, including tents, folding tables and benches, kitchen utensils and excavation equipment. Some of the villagers at Agios Menas, whom we had befriended, Thomas Siambekas, and Apostolis the cafe owner and his wife, offered the use of a donkey to help take some of our belongings from their village down to the river. Thomas led the way, carrying a large plastic barrel on his back intended to contain water for sieving sediments from the excavation, and waded across the river with us. For him and the other villagers, it was as much of a novelty and an adventure as for us.

Other team members soon followed, some with their own cars – Clive Gamble, Pat Carter, Colette Roubet, a French specialist in stone artefacts, a small team of English and Greek students, and Paula Wilby as cook, a family friend of Carter's with experience of bush life in South Africa. Derek and Carolyne Sturdy brought their own Landrover, intending to survey the geology of the wider region. We cleared an area for the main campfire on a spot that had clearly been used by others in previous years, and built a simple bench consisting of dry-stone walling under a nearby tree to store our pots and pans (Figure 4). The villagers at Agios Menas agreed to make deliveries of food by donkey down to the river, Paula worked out arrangements for bringing in additional supplies and cooking meals over an open fire, and the routine of camp life and excavation got under way.

Excavation quickly established that beneath the layer of modern goat dung at Klithí there was a very thick deposit of sediments crammed full of thousands of stone artefacts and broken animal bones typical of the last ice age and at least 10,000 years old. Clive Gamble and Colette Roubet, responsible, respectively, for the study of animal bones and flint artefacts, worked out procedures for studying the material in the camp using folding tables and chairs brought in for the purpose. It was clear that we had a major site that would need more intensive investigation in future years and long-term arrangements for permission to excavate and for the study and storage of the finds.

We arranged another meeting with Metropolitan Sebastian in Konitsa to explain our work and secure his approval. At first, he was rather formal. Vangelis Papaconstantinou, one of our Greek students who was acting as our interpreter, explained that when Klithí was occupied, Epirus and southern Albania were part of the same culture area with Klithí at its centre. Immediately the mood of the meeting changed. Metropolitan Sebastian was a long-standing advocate for the protection of the Greek Christian minority in Albania and for the incorporation of 'greater' Epirus (the areas north and south of the international frontier) into the Greek State. The idea of a Stone Age precedent clearly appealed to him. He summoned an assistant to bring bags of fruit and vegetables from the Church's own gardens for us to take back to camp. Then he pulled open a drawer from his desk and handed each of us a crystallised fruit wrapped in cellophane. We were not sure whether we were to eat these on the spot or take them away, and nothing was said about approval for our research, but it was clear that this was the signal that the meeting was at an end. The following week he made an unannounced visit to the site, blessed the excavation trenches, and assured us of his future support.

Much of my time that year was taken up with negotiations to obtain materials and arrange for the building of the new winter shelter for the Dinoulis goats and a new wall and fence to protect the Klithí excavation. A smaller rock opening higher up the slope from Klithí was judged suitable for a new goat shelter and a lorry with a load of timber and sheets of corrugated iron (tin) was ordered from Ioannina and duly arrived but was unable to drive down the short vehicle track off the main road to the beginning of the path. Pack mules that could have negotiated the narrow paths and steep slopes of the Klithí gorge were rare. Those who owned them lived in distant villages or wanted exorbitant sums

of money. In the end, we carried the materials in ourselves. Dinos Kirkou from Aristi, famed for his flat cap and single tooth, who had advised on the construction, began work. Like so many in these mountain villages, he was still sprightly, strong and energetic in his eighth decade (Frontispiece). Local workmen were hard to find but eventually two more were recruited, and Derek and Carolyne Sturdy, who ran their own engineering business, supervised the construction. By the end of the season a splendid new shelter had been completed (Figure 5).

The following year we returned with a larger team. We opened up a larger area of the site for excavation (Figure 6) and resumed the same pattern of living and studying finds in the Klithí camp (Figures 7, 8 and 9). We brought in an inflatable dinghy to help transport food supplies and equipment, and finally secured a long-term rental agreement for a house in Aristi that met with the approval of the Ioannina Museum as an archaeological store. The house belonged to the Garofallou family, who lived in Athens, only rarely visited Aristi, and were willing to agree a five-year rental period at a reasonable price as their contribution to the Greek cultural heritage. The accommodation provided a good-size work area in the main room and proved invaluable for the analysis of smaller quantities of material under laboratory-like conditions, including the use of a microscope, and for occasional overnight stays by individual members of the team.

In 1985, the pace of work intensified, including a large group of students from England, brought out to gain fieldwork experience and help with the labour-intensive work of excavation and the sorting of the many thousands of stone artefacts and animal bones. At one point in 1985, we had 42 people staying in the field camp, but numbers were usually lower. Regular members of the team became used to the idea that no one left the camp to visit the outside world, or came back, without carrying something along the path, bags of finds from the excavation for the dig house in Aristi, food supplies or items of equipment brought in on the return. We continued to source some of our supplies from Agios Menas, where the villagers, being off the main tourist route to Papingon, had little passing trade and were willing to sell some of their local produce and deliver it by donkey to the river bank opposite our camp. Our cook or other members of the team took a vehicle into one of the nearby towns for major shopping expeditions.

Fieldwork in 1986 and 1987 followed a similar pattern. In both years most of the team stayed in the field camp with occasional use of the dig house, and processing of finds mostly continued out in the open in the field camp close to the excavation. Kostas Karpouzis, a stone mason from Vikos, who also owned a taverna where we had eaten on occasion and had helped Dinos to carry out repairs to the dig house in Aristi in 1984, took an interest in our work. He offered to rebuild the wall and fence at Klithí, provided that our team supplied him with his raw materials – sand and gravel from the riverbed and stones from the surrounding slopes (Figures 10 and 11). So began the routine of 'early morning exercise', in which team members spent some time before the archaeological work of the day began, each carrying some materials up the slope. Kostas was so impressed with our exertions that when he came into our field camp to receive his payment at the end of the job, he brought bottles of brandy to give to *us* to celebrate completion of the work.

By 1987, after three full seasons of excavation (not including the preliminary work of 1983), we were required by the rules of the Antiquities service and the British School at Athens to stop excavation and concentrated solely on the study of the finds. By the end of 1988, it was time to take stock, to wind down the excavation and to complete the post-excavation study of all the many bags of artefacts and animal bones, many of which still remained to be examined. In 1988, we returned with a smaller team. The most important development that year was the offer by the Aristi village headman and the schoolteacher, Vassilis Kondokallis, to have the use of the school premises, with a large classroom, good lighting and suitable work chairs and large tables for spreading out the finds. Together with the use of our own dig house, we were able to proceed more rapidly (Figure 12). Some of our team stayed

in the village with the Hadziyannis (Elektra) and Alexandra/Vaia families, but a small group continued to use the field camp in order to complete work at Klithí, including the completion of a drilling programme to probe the deeper levels of the deposit, and the final filling in and protection of the excavation trenches.

By this time our project had become well known in the village, and In the summer of 1989, we arranged to rent houses belonging to Eleni Zissi and Amalia Pagouni, the latter large enough to accommodate a larger group and with a kitchen where we could cook our own meals. We intensified the study of finds, making use of the school premises and our dig house as in the previous year. Nick Winder and Tom Cadbury had taken over completion of the animal-bone remains and used the large tables in the school room to spread out the thousands of finds to make it easier to sort and record them. John Gowlett set up a table outside in the school courtyard to examine some of the artefacts from one of Higgs's excavations, which had been brought from the Ioannina Museum. Colette Roubet, meanwhile, had the use of the dig house to continue her study of the Klithí flints artefacts. Yannis Zisis, the Aristi headman, came by one day to look at the finds. Towards the end of our stay, the head of the Aristi-Vikos Cultural Union (Enosis Aristis-Vikou), Mr. Gouvis, showed us two houses belonging to the community which he thought might be suitable for creating an archaeological store and exhibition. Our final stay in Aristi was in 1992, a short summer season devoted to the search for archaeological sites and palaeoenvironmental analysis in the wider Voïdomatis-Aoos region.

Reflections: Wider Connections, Impact and Legacy

Over a ten-year period, several hundred people from many parts of the world passed through Aristi and travelled down the hill to our field camp as participants in the archaeological work or as visitors. Our archaeological team excavated, labelled and examined more than half a million stone artefacts, animal bones and other cultural material from Klithí, and our palaeoenvironmental team reconstructed the climatic history of the area and changes in the landscape across the wider region over the past 100,000 years. Momentous events were taking place in the wider world during the project, which registered an impact in the local area. Some, such as the Mount St. Helen's volcanic eruption of 1980 or the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986, though seemingly remote and short-lived, were the cause of much discussion in the local tavernas and attracted our attention because of their impact on the summer weather and irradiation of the local food supply. Others such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, the opening of Greece to travel from eastern Europe and the breakdown of the border with Albania, had more immediate and dramatic repercussions locally as well as longer term effects.

Looking back, in an age that is now far more conscious about health and safety, and where cross-border travel the length and breadth of Europe and Asia has become more common, we would not be allowed to conduct the Klithí excavations in the same way today. Our Universities and their insurers would not allow it. Living and working in a remote and inaccessible valley would be regarded as too full of risks. As it was, we were lucky. We had no serious accidents and very few incidents, none that were not dealt with by swift action on our part or with help from Aristi. By the early 1990s, new regulations were being enforced by local park rangers employed by the Vikos-Aoos National Park in the interests of protecting the natural environment. The goatherds and their animals were destined to be moved out of the valley, so we heard. Even we could not take our car down the track to the river and park our car in its usual spot at the beginning of the footpath to Klithí, and I doubt that we would be allowed now to camp at our old site by the river.

What was the relationship between our work as archaeologists and what was going on around us in the world at large both locally and more widely, and what was the impact and legacy of our work? Much of the answer to those questions must be written by others. Many participants and observers during our time at Klithí will have their own stories to tell. As the person at the centre of the

archaeological operation, I can testify to some of the events we witnessed and identify certain principles that informed our work. Some were obvious to us at the time; others have become more apparent in retrospect.

When we began work in 1983, only rarely did outsiders walk up the footpath from the bridge at Klithonia as far as Klithí, usually adventurous individuals from Europe or further afield, and none from the Aristi end. Those whom we met, mostly from England or Germany, had returned after visits in previous years to enjoy the dramatic scenery and the peaceful beauty of the scene and evidently found our presence an unwelcome intrusion. 'Was ist das schweinerei?' [what is this pigsty?], observed one exasperated German visitor, looking at our tents and belongings scattered across the river terrace. Clearly, we had destroyed their summer idyll and they vowed to spend their summers elsewhere. Otherwise, nobody bothered us, or questioned what we were doing. We always had official permits from the regional and national authorities for our work. An archaeological representative from the Greek antiquities service spent time with us every year, responsible for ensuring good relations with the local and regional authorities, and our geological and palaeoenvironmental work in the wider region was overseen by IGME (the National Institute for Geological and Mineral Exploration). Otherwise, we were left to get on with our fieldwork without interruption. Only once did someone from the Forestry Department come through the camp to obtain our assurances that we were not destroying trees for firewood.

Albania was completely sealed off and unknowable, despite its proximity, since Greece and Albania, were then still technically at war, and the border was under strict military control, as we discovered in 1981. After a shopping trip to Konitsa, we decided to look for a vehicle track that might take us close enough to see something of this forbidden land. An all-weather paved road heading towards the top of a hill and signs forbidding photography looked promising, confirmed when we reached the top of the hill, where a soldier literally jumped out from behind a bush with a machine gun. We were taken to the guard post where the commanding officer roused his sleepy comrades to serve us coffee and took us to his lookout post to view the other side through his binoculars. He explained that their busiest time was at night, checking for smugglers trying to cross the border. The Albanian landscape, spread out across a broad valley below us, looked utterly empty as far as the distant horizon, devoid of any visible human life or settlement and about as accessible and welcoming as the surface of the moon.

Some years later, before the final collapse of communism, our palaeoenvironmental team were engaged in exploration near the border and described the scene at the official frontier crossing as something like a modern version of a Medieval vision of hell. Huge steel gates controlled the flow of traffic, designed primarily to stop illegal immigration from the Albanian side, where a great crush of people clamoured to get through. Those who made it were quickly rounded up by Greek police patrols waiting nearby and sent back. On the Greek side was a long queue of vehicles piled high with refrigerators, washing machines and other electrical goods, waiting to cross into Albania. By the early 1990s, more and more illegal immigrants were getting through, mostly young men, who used mountain paths to keep well away from villages or police patrols. We met some of them while doing survey on foot in the upper reaches of the Vikos Gorge in 1992, groups of ten or a dozen men in ragged clothes and bare feet trudging east towards Thessaly in search of employment and a better life. Some years after we had finished our fieldwork in Greece, I heard that another similar group had come through the Voïdomatis, broken through the fence at Klithí to take shelter, and lit a fire that spread to destroy some of the protective layer of goat dung, leaving yet another trace of human activity to add to the many previous layers from a more distant past.

By the end of our project in the early 1990s, the region was opening up to more visitors and from new directions. The world was changing around us, and has continued to change, becoming more widely

connected, more crowded, more heavily regulated, and in some respects more disorderly, more dangerous and more unpredictable. Our own presence was a symptom of those changes, and we had an unusual opportunity to observe some of them at first hand.

The most important point about an archaeological expedition and its relationship to the local and national community, and one that all archaeologists are keenly aware of, especially those like us who work in a foreign country, is our obligations as guests in somebody else's territory. The first obligation, and one we acted on from the very beginning, is that we should engage Greek archaeologists and especially Greek students in our work. In origin our project could not be a joint English-Greek project, because there were no established Greek archaeologists engaged in Palaeolithic archaeology or environmental archaeology. These were new topics that were little practised in Greece when we began and were not taught in the Universities. The few discoveries that had been made in earlier decades had been the outcome of visits by foreign archaeologists and had left no lasting tradition in Greece. One way, then, in which a foreign expedition can repay the hospitality of the host country is to transfer knowledge and training to a new generation of students and promote the results more widely to the national archaeological community.

From the very beginning, we had Greek students working with us in the field. Reports of our work soon spread, attracting national and international interest, and more Greek students and sometimes senior members of the Antiquities service came to visit or to work with us. Some students came to England for further University training; many have gone on to successful careers in archaeology, including three who were with us from the earliest days: Eugenia Adam, Eleni Kotjabopoulou and Nena Galanidou.

A second obligation is the establishment of good relations with the local community. When strangers turn up in a foreign location and start digging holes in the ground, sometimes quite literally in someone's back garden, the local people not unreasonably want to know why this is happening and what benefit it will bring. The first reaction is one of suspicion, and the thought that perhaps these foreigners are looking for buried treasure with which to make their personal fortune. Why else would these strangers be spending all this money and effort so far away from home? One rather improbable story that had circulated for many years in the mountain villages and surfaced again with our arrival was that we were looking for the gold that Winston Churchill had supposedly buried for safe keeping during World War II. Other stories may get embroidered about the strange goings on that are taking place on an archaeological dig out of sight and sound of the local people. These myths are easily dispelled and the Greek tradition of hospitality to strangers soon took over, but the suspicion remains for a time that a foreign expedition is passing through and having obtained results to suit their own interests will quickly depart again.

Given that background, local people not unreasonably deserve to be told what the archaeologists are doing on their land. In truth archaeology has a long history of popularity with a wider public, and archaeologists like to tell the public about their work. Almost everyone, everywhere in the world where I have worked, is interested in the history of their own family, the place where they live, the excitement of archaeological discovery, and how that history connects them to a deeper past and a wider world, and gives a greater significance to their everyday life and their own small corner of the planet. Often the local history, and the presence of archaeologists making new discoveries that take that history further back in time, is a matter of intense local pride. The enthusiasm and interest of the local people is also the best guarantee against damage to archaeological sites or the theft of antiquities.

Today, no archaeological expedition is funded without a formal programme of public engagement including lectures, visits to local schools, exhibitions, sometimes the building of a local heritage centre

or museum, a website, and these days, of course, all the digital apparatus of social media and mobile phone apps. Things were not so well organised in the 1980s. Our remoteness from any of the villages, the difficulties of getting to the valley on foot, and our preoccupation with the logistics of daily life and work in an outdoor camp, were an inhibition to local public engagement. Much of my time was spent shuttling between Klithonia, Agios Menas, Aristi, Ioannina and Athens to seek permission or help for various activities, to keep those more distant informed of our activities and to encourage local people to visit the site to see for themselves, though most were too shy or too busy to take up the offer. Those in Aristi who were interested in our work learned enough from the local tavernas and the members of our team, especially the Greek speakers, who spent time there on visits for meals, for shopping or in transit to and from the outside world. Larger groups sometimes came from further afield, notably in 1985 from the Zagori Institute who had been primed beforehand with a lecture by Eugenia Adam, and who visited the site accompanied by Professor Photios Petsas, the resident Aristi historian, and his wife (see Petsas and Saralis 1982). Interest in Aristi grew towards the end of our project when we were spending more time working in the village. From time to time the wish for a local museum surfaced, both in Aristi and in Klithonia, only to be firmly rejected by the Antiquities authorities in Ioannina and Athens, and we were unable to pursue this idea. In retrospect, we might have done more to engage the interest of the local people and tell them more about our work, and it fell to our successors to develop this further.

A final point that I witnessed at Klithí and have observed elsewhere in the world is the close relationship between archaeological expeditions and the growth of tourism. Archaeologists tend to visit remote areas that have remained inaccessible because of wars, military restrictions, proximity to international frontiers, or lack of local facilities and poor road access. These are the areas most likely to yield new discoveries precisely because of their remoteness and because modern development has not yet obscured or destroyed the surface traces of earlier periods.

In the early 1980s, outside visitors to Aristi, so it seemed, were relatively few, or intent on heading up the hill to Papingon for mountain hiking, rock climbing or botanising in the Vikos Gorge, and while there were a few rooms for rent, there were no hotels in the area. By our third year it was clear that more visitors were starting to arrive, including Greek tourists who had discovered the pleasures of camping in the countryside. By 1987, they were staying in tents in quite large numbers on our original camping site near the Aristi-Papingon road bridge over the river. New diseases were also starting to appear. Many team members suffered from a temporary stomach sickness in that season. Suspicion focused on the water supply, particularly as some were used to drinking water directly from the river. But since the villagers in Aristi had the same problem, contaminated water was ruled out as a cause. At any rate, the affliction was only a temporary one. A new hotel was due to open at the Klithonia end of the valley and others were under construction in Aristi. It would not be long, we thought, before the tour buses would arrive, bringing larger groups from further afield. Sure enough, one afternoon, while we were sipping a coffee at Alexandra's before heading down to the camp after a trip into Ioannina, a very large Pullman bus came through the village and duly got stuck trying to negotiate the sharp bend at the entrance to the village.

The sequence is predictable. First come the individual tourists with specialist interests, four-wheel-drive vehicles and their own camping gear. Then the roads get surfaced with tarmac, making access easier. Then come the archaeologists, and after them the tourist coaches bringing visitors on package tours for a day visit, and finally the local hotels and restaurants that can cater for larger numbers and longer stays.

After Greece, the next major project I became involved in was in Saudi Arabia, where I have witnessed a similar sequence of developments over the past two decades. On my first visit in 2002, I attended an international conference in Riyadh on 'International Eco-Tourism and Saudi Arabia'. The two

opening speakers, leading members of the Saudi royal family and of UNESCO, respectively, both made the same point. The biggest industry on a global scale is not the oil industry; nor is it international trade; it is tourism. Tourism is, today, a multi-trillion-dollar industry, accompanied by the development of national and international conventions for the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and a growing number of sites protected by UNESCO world heritage status. It provides employment and income as well as protection of some of our most valuable evidence of our common heritage as a human species on planet Earth. It is encouraged by governments across the world, for all these reasons, as well as for reasons of national pride, and in principle it should provide a vehicle for international cooperation and mutual understanding in a world that needs such interconnections more than ever before. We archaeologists know these facts and often use them as arguments for getting funding for our archaeological research. In their turn, politicians, government agencies and a wider public, who ultimately pay through their taxes and in other ways for us to do our work, are entitled to know about our results and why they are important and interesting, and we have an obligation to tell them. So it is in Aristi; and so it is everywhere else in the world.

Perhaps the theme that emerges most strongly from my experience of working at Klithí, and more generally from the type of archaeology that we do, which reaches far back in time to a very distant past and is worldwide in its scope, is that change is inevitable, much of it the result of natural and social forces that are far beyond our awareness or control. Nothing stays the same for long. During the Palaeolithic era, the pace of change must have seemed so slow as to be non-existent, and the inhabitants of Klithí between 20,000 and 16,000 years ago may have thought that their lives were unchanging from generation to generation. But even in that period, changes of climate and the natural environment were having their effect elsewhere in the wider Epirus landscape and beyond, requiring people to adapt their way of life and patterns of movement to the changed surroundings or to move their settlements to new locations. Eventually, those changes reached the Voïdomatis River and people had to abandon Klithí and establish new ways of living elsewhere. Similar changes have continued into the more recent history of the region.

Already the world was changing around us during the time of the Klithí project, quite dramatically so at times, and perhaps our own presence contributed in a small way to some of those changes. Certainly, we have left material traces of our stay down in the camp site by the river and at Klithí itself. These have added an additional 'archaeological' layer of human activity that will be recognised as such by archaeologists who come back to study the area in some distant future. Many of our team and our many activities have, no doubt, become part of the social history of the area and entered the collective memory. Further changes have clearly taken place since we departed, with the building of more hotels and restaurants, new sources of income, the expansion in the activities of the National Park, and the creation of walking trails and other facilities. The attractions of the region and a knowledge of its cultural and natural heritage are now available to the whole world at the touch of a button on a mobile phone. A further upturn in global warming is now upon us, and, as I write, we are in the middle of a global pandemic crisis that has imposed new social and economic stresses. All of this will have consequences and require new adjustments that we can hardly foresee. A knowledge of deep history and the cultural heritage of a region is something to be valued because it shows us that people have faced similar challenges in the past and survived them. And that should give us a sense of the continuity and resilience of human life and hope for the future.

One evening in 1994, on one of my last trips to the region, after visiting the Greek team excavating at Boïla, I saw an unfamiliar older man gazing upriver from the old bridge at Klithonia. "Where are you from?" I asked in Greek, supposing that he was from one of the nearby towns or villages. "From Russia" he replied. He was someone who had returned after a long absence to a region he once knew as a younger man, a symptom of the geopolitical changes that engulfed us all in the 20th century and of the inter-connectedness of the world we live in. Perhaps one day I too shall return.

Acknowledgements
All the many individuals, institutions and organisations who supported our work during the Klithí years and contributed to it in many different ways, are acknowledged in the official publications of the Klithí project. However, a report of this nature would not be complete without re-iterating our gratitude to the organisations who gave us official permission for our research, and to the local people in the villages of Klithonia, Aristi, Agios Menas and Vikos, who made our work possible, helped us in many different ways, and taught us something about their local culture, way of life, and the long-standing traditions of Greek friendship and hospitality. In the former category are the Ephoreia of Classical and Prehistoric Archaeology Ioannina, the Ephoreia of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology Athens, the British School at Athens, the Institute of Geological and Mineralogical Research Athens, the Metropolitanate of Konitsa, and the Village Council of Klithonia. In the latter category the individuals are too numerous to list in full, and some are mentioned in the text above, but we single out in particular Dinos Kirkou of Aristi and Kostas Karpouzis of Vikos for practical advice and assistance, the Garofallou family for the use of their house in Aristi, Vassilis Kondokallis for permission to use the Aristi school premises, and Alexandra Nikolaides, Michalis Hadziyannis, Yannis Zisis and their respective families in Aristi for acts of kindness and hospitality on many occasions.

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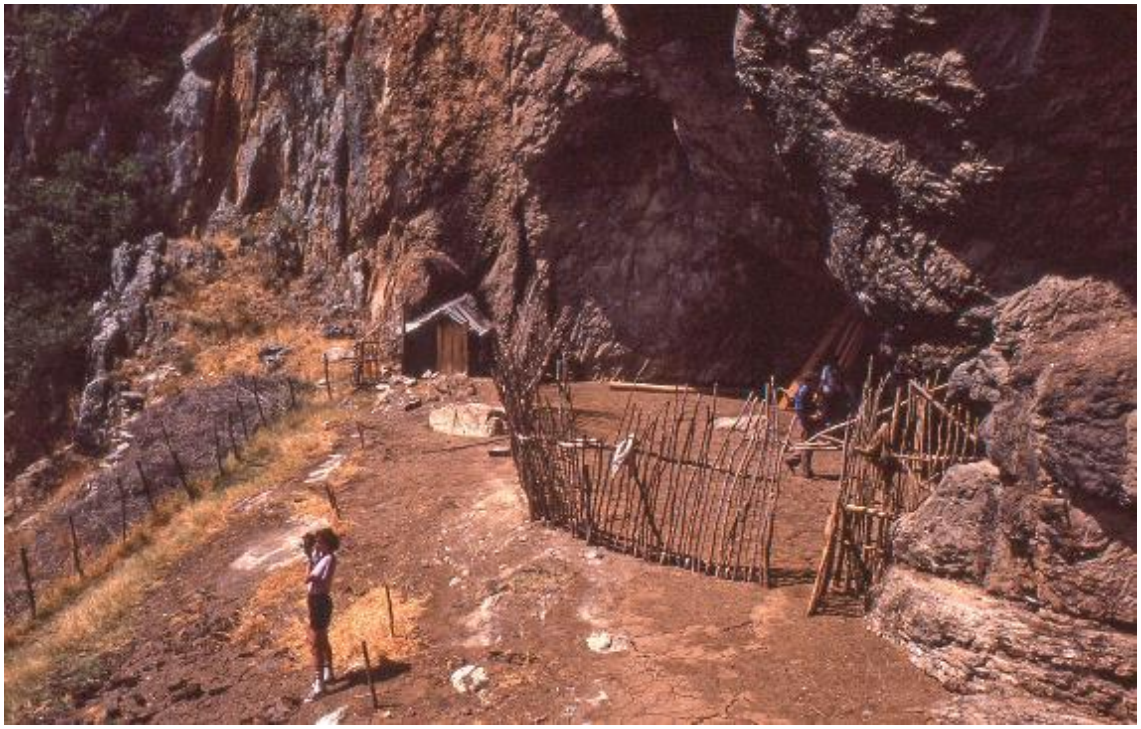

Figure 1. Klithí in 1982 before excavation began, showing the brown surface layer of goat dung and the inner fence of stout wooden stakes built by the Vikos goatherds, Trifon and Kostas Dinoulis, to keep their goats safe in winter. To the left, an outer fence of wire netting is visible, and beyond it further down the slope can be seen the remains of a dry-stone wall built by earlier tenants of the goat shelter. The human figures are Eugenia Adam to the left and John Gowlett to the right.

Figure 2. Close up of the new wall and fence at Klithí in 1986 after completion of repairs by Carolyne and Derek Sturdy, seen standing outside the gate. Michalis Kaltsounis is in the foreground with some of his goats on their daily round.

Figure 3
Roz Mason cooking over the open hearth in 1986.

Figure 4
The field camp in 1986. The kitchen area with the dry-stone table is to the left, the hearth area is to the right with seating provided around it by large tree logs and folding camp chairs. The oars for the inflatable dinghy can be seen leaning against the tree trunk in the foreground.

Figure 5
General view of the new goat shelter built into the cliff face high above Klithí.

Figure 6
Klithí excavations in progress in 1984. Figures (from left to right) are Sarah Green, Muzna Nicola, Carole Merchant, Geoff Bailey and Sarah Joyce.

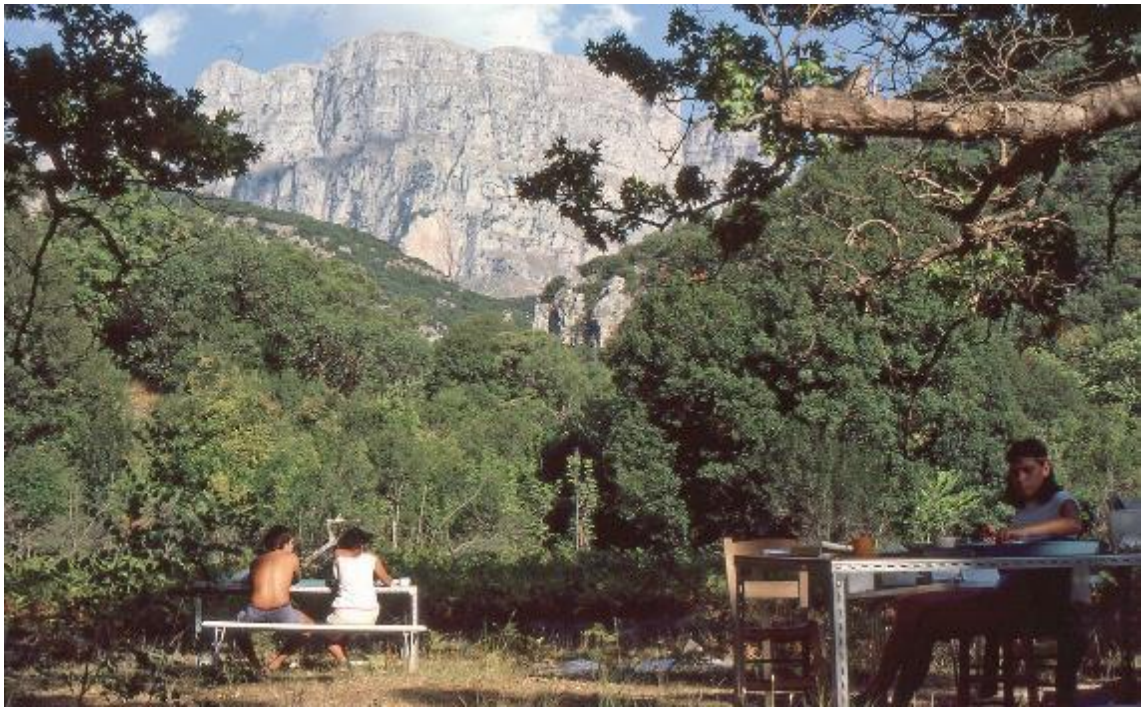

Figure 7
Team members working on the finds from Klithí in the field camp in 1984, with the cliffs of Astraka in the distance. Figures (from left to right) are Matthew Johnson, Muzna Nicola and Dimitra Kamarinou.

Figure 8
The work area in the field camp in 1984 with a large tent to the left for storing finds and equipment, and team members working on the finds from Klithí at tables in the middle distance.

Figure 9
Geoff Bailey (with back to the camera) giving a talk on archaeology to the Klithí team in the field camp in 1984. Other figures (from left to right) are Shan Smith, John Sherman, Maria Sioboti, Roark Mühlen-Schulte, Muzna Nicola, Geoffrey King, Sophie King, Nikos Kyriazis, Rebecca Montague, Helen Kloosterman (at the back in the kitchen area), Sally Wilford, Colette Roubet and Clive Gamble (at the back), Mary-Jane Holmes, Vasso Fotou, Eleni Kotjabopoulou, Eugenia Adam and Mike Newbury.

Figure 10
Kostas Karpouzis at Klithí in 1986 carrying out additional repairs to the wall.

Figure 11
A general view of the Klithí wall after completion of repairs in 1986

Figure 12
Team members working on the finds from Klithí in the courtyard of the dig house at Aristi in 1988. Figures (from left to right) are Will Giles, Twigs Way, Kiki Marabeli, Thomas Cadbury and Steve Kemp

Dinos Kirkou (central figure) sitting in Alexandra's café in 1986, with Spyros Gkioka (R) and Panagiotis Panagioti (L)