

Definition: **Chios** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1.

a Greek island in the Aegean, near the western coast of Turkey.

834 km² Chios

Greek Khios

Chian *adjective noun*

Chians

Summary Article: **Chios**

From *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*

Chios is an island in the eastern Aegean, located close to the coast of Asia Minor and situated on well-traveled routes of maritime communication.

From the Neolithic period on, Chios was home to small settled communities, of which the sites of Agio Gala in the northwest and Emborio in the southeast have yielded the best archaeological evidence. Emborio continued to flourish through the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Age until fire resulted in abandonment of the site at the end of the Late Helladic IIIc period (Hood 1981, 1982). Evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation has also been found at Leukathia, Nagos, and Kato Phana, and on the islet of Psara positioned just off the northwest coast of Chios (Beaumont and Archontidou-Argyri 2004).

While the unrest that Chios and the wider Aegean suffered at the end of the Mycenaean period has traditionally been associated with the replacement of the preexisting inhabitants of Chios with Ionian Greek speakers arriving from the west, recent archaeological findings suggest rather the essential continuity of the preexisting population that combined with the migrant newcomers (Beaumont 2010).

While the subsequent Protogeometric period is as yet sparsely represented in the archaeological record, finds from Chios town, Kato Phana, and Psara indicate the existence of an Aegean *koine* linking Euboia and Thessaly to Chios, Lesbos, Old Smyrna and Troy (Lemos 2002: 212–17). More plentiful material evidence dating to the eighth century BCE suggests that the later part of the Geometric period witnessed a return to larger and more centralized settlements, with the refounding of Emborio on Chios and the establishment of Mavri Rachi on Psara (Boardman 1967). Evidence of flourishing late-eighth-century and seventh-century trade networks indicate the links of Chios that now existed, in particular with Samos, Old Smyrna, and Phrygia (Beaumont 2010). The seventh century BCE saw Chios assert her Ionian identity by joining together with eleven other cities in the eastern Aegean in the Panionian League of Ionian states. As the Archaic period advanced, Chios also consolidated her mercantile networks and naval power. Together with other Greek cities, Chios founded the trading station of Naukratis in Egypt, and exported her famous wine, gum mastic, ceramic fine-wares, and turpentine throughout the Mediterranean. The Archaic and Classical periods also saw Chios develop as a cultural dynamo. Claiming to be the birthplace of the great Greek poet Homer, the island became the base for the Homeridae, rhapsodes who traced their ancestry to Homer himself. And it was from Chios

also that the tragic poet Ion (see Ion of Chios) hailed, bringing further fame to his homeland. In the sphere of figurative art, Chios produced such famous sculptors as Mikkiades, Boupalos, Archermos, and Glaukos, whose stylistic influence stretched widely across the Aegean world.

By at least the Archaic period, and perhaps even earlier, political control of the island had become vested in the urban settlement of Chios town, located centrally on the east coast. Sadly, in archaeological terms, this ancient metropolis is now largely invisible as a result of the presence of the modern-day town atop the earlier remains. But an important fragmentary inscription from the second quarter of the sixth century BCE demonstrates that at this time Chios was already exploring democratic mechanisms of rule, with the operation of a representative council and assembly (Robinson 1997: 90–100). The Chiots' well-established and prosperous way of life was, however, rudely disrupted in 545 when the Persians took control of western Asia Minor and subjected the Ionian territories to their overlordship, in response to which the Ionians finally revolted in 499. But their uprising ultimately failed and the Persians' ensuing retribution of 493 was fierce: "netting" Chios, they marched across the island from one end to the other, destroying everything in their path.

Released from Persian rule in 479 on the occasion of the victory of the Athenians and their allies, Chios reclaimed its independence and became a member of the Delian League headed by Athens. Successfully rebuilding their physical, political, and economic infrastructure, the Chiots now reestablished democratic rule and became renowned for their prosperity and huge slave population, consequently enjoying for the next half century a much-envied lifestyle. The Peloponnesian War (431–404), however, seriously undermined the fortunes of Chios. Allying herself first with the Athenians, the Chiots gradually became disillusioned with the Athenians' increasing imperialism and, turning their face towards Sparta, in 412 rebelled against Athens' leadership. The result saw the island besieged and sacked for the second time in a century. Thereafter, the generally unstable political conditions in the Aegean saw Chios fall successively under Spartan and Athenian control.

In 333 a Macedonian garrison was established in Chios and subsequently in 332 the Chiots received a letter from Alexander the Great (see Alexander III, the Great), the text of which survives today in an inscription housed in the Chios Archaeological Museum (Archontidou and Grigoriadou 2000: 196–9). Committing to restore the Chian political democracy, Alexander ordered the island to supply his fleet with twenty triremes. During the Hellenistic period, Chios came successively under the influence of the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, the Attalids and, once again, the Macedonians. As an autonomous subject of Rome from 146 BCE, Chios fared well until severely punished for its alliance with Rome in the Mithradatic wars. Earthquake and famine further undermined the island in the late first century BCE, and in 70 CE Vespasian stripped Chios of her autonomous status.

While the ancient literary sources provide little assistance in reconstructing the history of early Christian Chios, the archaeological evidence suggests that between the fourth and seventh centuries CE the island enjoyed more settled and prosperous conditions, with the construction of imposing basilica churches at Chios town, Emborio, and Kato Phana. Subsequently, the seventh century saw instability return to the Aegean world with the incursion of the Arabs, and from their destructive raids there was no escape for Chios. A long period of decline now marked the island's history, and not until the tenth century do signs of recovery become apparent, by which time Chios's place had been established in the Byzantine world order.

SEE ALSO:

Emporio on Chios; Ionia; Ionian Revolt; Kato Phana on Chios; Panionion.

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