

THE HISTORY OF ASSOS



Fig. 1. The Acropolis of Assos looking from the River Valley
The island of Lesbos is seen at the right

THE present work is intended to be a book of plates, giving the facts without comment.

But some account of Assos will be desired, and of the work of the expedition, the results of which are here set forth. This is in large part taken directly from the Reports by Mr. Clarke, already published,¹ to which the reader is referred.

The history of Assos was varied and eventful, but not recounted in detail by ancient writers. It is probable that Pedasos, the capital city of the Leleges, the town sacked by Achilles,² is identical with the later Assos. The Leleges, famed as navigators and pirates, inhabited the Southern Troad at the time of the Trojan war, being spoken of by Homer as living on the coast.³ This statement is confirmed by Strabo, who describes the province of the Leleges as extending from Lecton to Ida,⁴ and again especially states that they possessed the country around Assos.⁵ In the *Iliad*, Elatos is spoken of as living "by the banks of the Satnioeis, in steep Pedasos."⁶ In another passage, the king of the Leleges, Altes, father-in-law of Priam, is said to have dwelt in "lofty Pedasos upon the Satnioeis."⁷ The acropolis of Assos is thus described by Homer with truth to nature, and the relation of the names Pedasos and Assos seems to confirm this conjecture, and the often-remarked lack of all direct mention of Assos in the Homeric poems is explained by it. The Southern Troad, once occupied by Leleges and Thracian Mysians, appears to have become gradually Hellenized by the Aeolic colonization from

Lesbos, which is only about ten kilometers distant from Assos. Having become wholly Greek, Assos advanced in power and prosperity, until it possessed an extended tract of the surrounding country, and was itself able to found the colony of Gargara upon a spur of the Ida range, twenty kilometers to the East. Assos was thus intimately connected with Methymna and Mytilene, at a time when they represented the highest advance of Hellenic civilization in this region. When, after an existence of perhaps five centuries, Assos, in 560 B.C., fell into the hands of the Lydians, it is spoken of as the strongest and most important city of the Troad. The Lydians seem to have dreaded the advancing civilization and political power of the Greek settlements of the coast, and they are said to have conquered a great part of Mysia, including the shores of the Hellespont; so that the Milesians, the most influential Greeks of Asia, were obliged to request permission of the Lydians to found Abydos in the Troad.⁸

One of the chief sources of the wealth of Gyges, Alyattes and Croesus, kings of Lydia, was reported to be⁹ a mine situated between Pergamon and Atarneus, almost within sight of Assos.

The artistic activity of the Greeks in Asia Minor, noticeable during the sixth century B.C., may possibly be attributed to the fostering interest of the Lydian dynasty, particularly of Croesus. The building of the Artemision at Ephesus, and of the great temple at Miletus, owed much to this monarch.

The sovereignty of Croesus (B.C. 563-548) was not of long duration. Fourteen years after his accession to the throne, the Lydian Empire fell into the hands of Cyrus. The Troad, under the name of Phrygia of the Hellespont, became a satrapy of the

¹ *Report on the Investigations at Assos, 1881*, by Joseph Thacher Clarke. *Papers of the Archaeological Institute of America*, Classical Series I, Boston, 1882. *Ibid.*, II, 1898.

² *Iliad* XX-97.

³ *Strabo* XIII-605.

⁴ *Iliad* VI-34.

⁵ *Iliad* X-428.

⁶ *Strabo* XIII-611.

⁷ *Iliad* XXI-87.

⁸ *Strabo* XIII-590.

⁹ *Strabo* XIV-680.