

## The Mallionta in antiquity"

Building the foundations of the book, we started searching for written sources. With myth as our companion, we found ourselves in the era of Sappho of Eressos, the great poetess. We began studying the endings of place names in western Lesvos. Tschil-ionta, Mall-ionta, trying to connect them to the present and giving our own explanations, how possibly the name of Mallionta came from the apples that might have existed in the beautiful valley in ancient times, and who knows, maybe these, along with the sound of the river's waters, inspired Sappho in one of her poems.... The certain thing is, as dear friend Spyros V. Piperas from Eressos writes below, "homeland is our childhood".

### Sappho's apples in Eressos and theories about Mallionta

In the Eressian dialect we have two place names with the same ending, related to two corresponding rivers that flow into the sea on the western coast of Lesvos:

\*Tsichlionta is a valley, on the road to Sigri, near the coast, created by the Tsichlionta river. This same river that falls into the sea creates the second- largest beach after the famous beach of Eressos, also named Tsichlionta.

\*Mallionta is a smaller valley, on the road to Mesotopos. about 3 km from the sea created by the Mallionta river. The same river, flowing into the sea, creates the third largest beach on the western coast of Lesvos, after Eressos and Tsichlionta, called "Chrouso".

Both valleys have always been inhabited. Mallionta had watermills, now in ruins but clearly visible.. Remains of the settlements and ruins are evident in both areas today.

The same suffix-ionta indicates the same grammatical formation mechanism in both river names, The two rivers are approximately 6-8 km apart (in a straight line). In ancient times, the suffix "-οῖς: in the nominative singular masculine gave adjectives the property of "large number". It seems that the river with many "kichles" (which due to tsitakism have reached as tsichles) was named kichloeis and through the assulative kichloenta or due to tsitakism and metathesis "o" and "e" Tsichlontas". Similarly the same happened with Mallionta. we initially have a river that creates a valley with many apple trees and consequently many apples since "malon" means apple in the Aeolic dialect, as accepted by Professor H. Mason. In the same way. We have the myth that gives the adjective "maloeis" and "Maloenta" in the accusative singular with metathesis "e" and "o" lead to the name Mallionta, meaning the river and the valley with many apples.

Let's talk about the myth of the maloeis Apollo. The adjective "maloeis" comes from the myth of Manto, daughter of the prophet Tiresias, priest of Apollo at the oracle. Manto, dancing at the festival in honor of Apollo, loses a precious necklace in the shape of a small golden apple. She prays to Apollo to help her find it, promising to build a temple in his honor and organize a corresponding festival every year. The golden apple is found, and thus the temple is built in honour of Maloeis Apollo in Mytilene.

Could one associate the valley "Mallionta" with the epithet "maloeis" of Apollo? Our wish would be to find a temple of Maloeis Apollo in the area of Mallionta in Mesotopos. However, I think this should be excluded for many reasons:

\* The Maloeis Apollo was worshipped in a powerful rival "city state" Mytilene, on the same island, and Eressos would likely avoid provoking Mytilene by promoting a similar worship towards Maloeis Apollo in Eressos.

\*From the lexicographer Hesychius of Alexandria (5th century AD) and the inscription of Eressos IG XII, Suppl.693, in honour of the citizen of Eressos, Aurelius Styrax son of Marcus, we learn that Apollo was worshiped in Eressos with the term ERESIOS APOLLON. Indeed, the honored Aurelius Styrax son of Marcus was a priest of Eresios Apollo.

We consider it unlikely that the Mallionta valley is related to a temple of Maloeis Apollo worshipped in Mytilene. Thus the Mallionta valley can only be associated with apples.

Fotis Vasiloglou, a teacher, told me that he heard from his uncle, Dimitris Skomboulis, 85 years old, that their family found an apple orchard with several apple trees, while other neighbors owned fields with more apple trees, always in the Mallionta valley! The variety was special: small, round fruits, delicious with an exceptional aroma.

Another resident of Mesotopos, Giorgos Ioann. Iosifellis -Karekos, assured me that by utilizing a 4-acre field of his father's in the Mallionta valley, he planted a common variety of apples called "starkin" that thrive in Thessaly. Mr Iosifellis' plantation went so well that in 2014 he harvested 3 tons of apples.

It should be emphasized that in the plain of Eressos itself, at a distance of about 3km from the coast, the late schoolteacher Elias Sachlos created an apple orchard of 100 trees. At the end of his life, this orchard with 100 trees of 7 acres had such a production of apples that Mr Sachlos needed to rent a refrigerated chamber in Mytilene to preserve his harvest from the entire winter until he sold it all!

Both examples in Mallionta and the plain of Eressos demonstrate that apple trees thrived in ancient times and still do today in Eressos.

Poets and writers generally tend to describe scenes with their heroes in imaginary landscapes obviously. But perhaps without wanting to, they often return to the places they loved and above all lived in during their childhood. Possibly Sappho is no exception. Thus, if one walks today through the Mallionta valley and its fields, passes by the watermills on the river's banks, one will clearly hear: "cold water gurgles through the reeds..."

The cold water singing as it passes through the apple-laden branches, perhaps more abundant in ancient times, while today one finds quinces, figs and pears.

It's worth noting that famous Sapphic reference to the "sweet apple" and the "apple pickers" which might have some connection to the apples of Mallionta.

**...like the sweet apple that's found at the tip of the branch, at the very tip, the apple-pickers forgot it, not that they forgot it but they couldn't reach it. The sweet apple hangs from the branch's tip, and they left it, didn't pick it. They didn't forget it but no one could reach it.** (Sotiris Kakisis "Sappho-The Poems- Eratp Publications 2002).

Obviously Sapho had vivid images from her childhood in Eressos. These images inspired her to write these wonderful verses that were fortunately preserved until today. I believe it is true that our "homeland is our childhood"!

P.S Allow me one more thing... Many times we try to find the linguistic connection between the current Eressian dialect and the Aeolian dialect in which Sapho wrote. Of-course, the prevalence of the ancient Ionic Greek dialect, the Alexandrian Koine (language of the Gospels and the church) eliminated the Doric forms and the Aeolian dialect in which Sapho wrote her poems. But since we're talking about apples "mala" in Aeolian , in the Eressian dialect today, the word "maloutsydounou-malokydon" has been preserved. This is used to describe, as rejectable, very small quinces. It seems that there was a variety of small apples in the area -millennia ago- something like small, wild apples that had a size between an apple and a quince, which ended up characterizing small quinces even today..

. Spyros Vas. Piperas

**"The remains of the Acropolis of Eressos" Photo. Nikos Karydis, July 2019 Eressos Lesvos**

photo caption pg20

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pg 18

3. The suffix "oentos" is used in the genitive singular and "oenta" in the accusative singular. For example we have the adjective "donakoeis" (for a river with many reeds) "donakoessa" in the feminine, for a lake) and " donakoen" in the neuter. for a well).

4.The great archaeologist Robert Koldewey was the first to note this in his renowned work

'Die antiken Baureste der Insel Lesbos. (The Ancient Remains of the Island of Lesbos) Berlin 1890 page 876: from Sigri to Eressos (...) Kichlontas in common speech Tschliotas, according to Koldewey.

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pg17

1. This is a depiction from a Roman-era mosaic floor in the Magoula area of Sparta. It measures approximately 1mx1m and is displayed on the upper right corner of the north wall of the Archaeological Museum of Sparta. It was part of a mosaic floor representation featuring inscribed figures of the Muses Ourania and Calliope, as a consequence of the philosopher Plato's characterization of Sapho as the "tenth Muse". The spelling "Sapho" is also found in the Ephesus inscription No 3360, again among the names of the Muses. Finally, the inscribed coin (SAPHO-ERESI) with two Ph's" found in Eressos and handed over to the Eressos Museum

in 2002, of which it has since become the emblem, conclusively settles the discussion about Sappho's birthplace being Eressos.

2. The major geographical area controlled by the ancient city-state on the Greek island of Lesbos.