

T E I R E S I A S

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The Leiden-Ljubljana Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project 2008 season

John Bintliff (Leiden University, The Netherlands), reports:

During 2008 the joint Leiden-Ljubljana Project continued work at the ancient city of Koroneia and the ancient city of Thespieae. The work was directed by John Bintliff (Koroneia) and Bozidar Slapsak (Thespieae). The Assistant Director was Professor Vladimir Stissi (Amsterdam), and the Assistant Field Director was Dr. A. Vionis (Leuven). We wish to acknowledge the always helpful support of Professor Vassilis Aravantinos for the Thebes Ephorate, the staff of the Dutch Institute in Athens, and the generous hospitality of Archbishop Hieronymus of Athens for our project accommodation at Evangelistria. A ceramic study season was carried out in January under the direction of Professor Jeroen Poblome (Leuven) and Professor Stissi. Key staff members for the fieldwork at Koroneia were Bart Noordervliet and Janneke van Zwienen (Leiden), whose specialist research is presented by them later in this report. Previous work has been presented in *Pharos. The Journal of the Dutch Institute at Athens* for the 2005 and 2006 seasons and is in press for the 2007 season (Bintliff 2006; Bintliff and Slapsak 2007, Bintliff and Slapsak *in press*).

Thespieae

The 2008 work at the ancient city of Thespieae is essential clarification of the earlier surface ceramic and architectural survey made under the direction of John Bintliff and Professor Anthony Snodgrass (Cambridge) in several seasons between 1985 and 2002. Additional research has been carried out in recent years on a large sample of the surface architecture by a small team directed by Professor Margharita Bonnano (Rome La Sapienza University), and their results will form part of a forthcoming monograph from

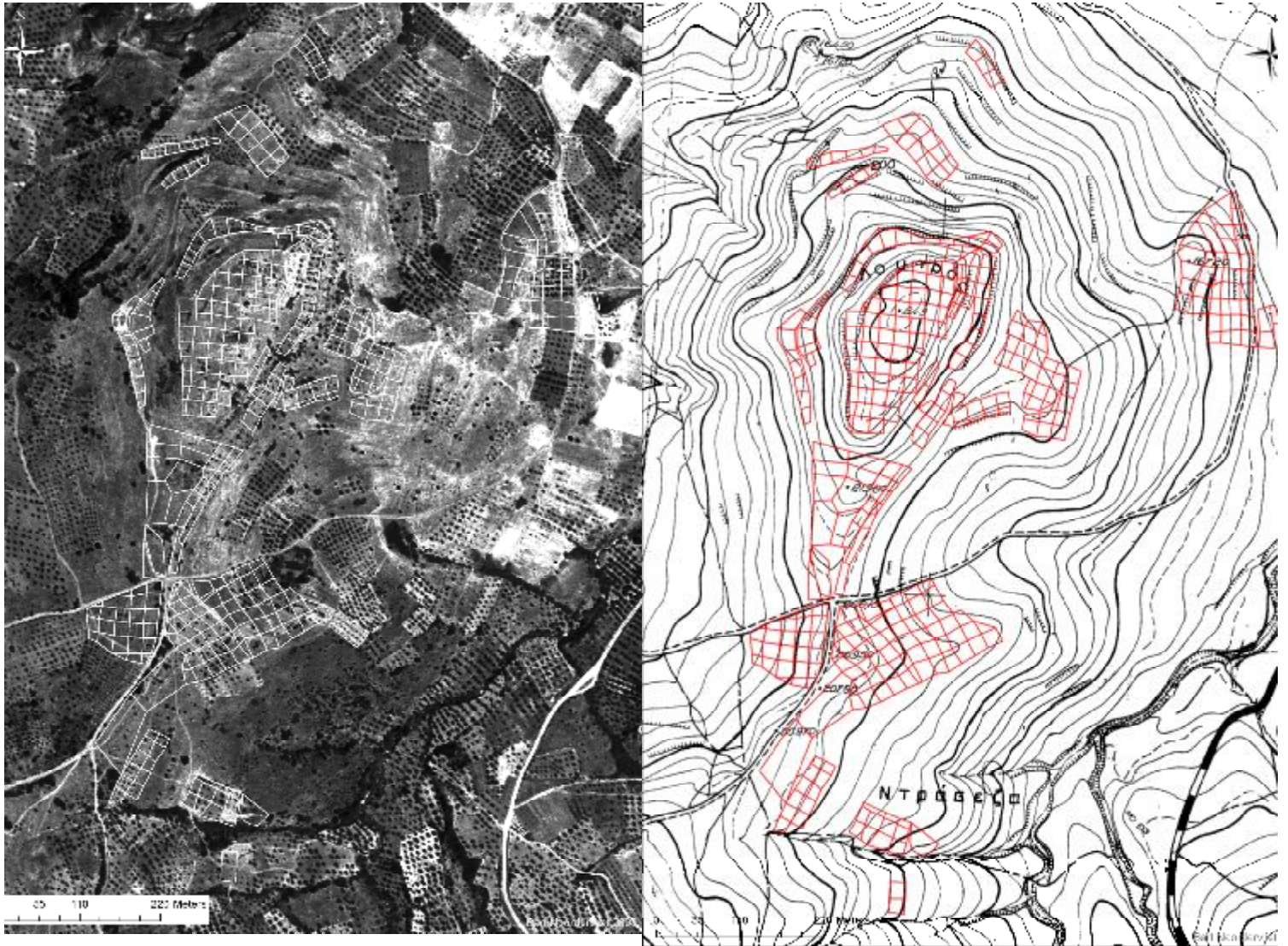
Cambridge University, volume 2 of the Boeotia Project, on the City of Thespieae. In 2008 the Ljubljana team of Bozidar Slapsak continued with the mapping of surface limestone blocks which may represent traces of the ancient city walls, together with other blocks and inscriptions from the ancient town. Two important localised studies were carried out in addition, where ongoing modern construction work inside the Late Roman Kastro, which lies in the centre of the low lying ancient town, and also on the outskirts of the modern village of Thespieae on the plateau edge above the ancient city, revealed stratified ancient deposits of importance for the history of the urban plan. The modern deep excavation within the Kastro revealed rich deposits, partly of a religious nature, including possible pieces dating back to Protogeometric times. A remarkable inscribed sherd, read with the assistance of Project epigrapher Professor Albert Schachter (McGill-Oxford), appears to mention an official of the Agora. This agrees excellently with the hypothesis of Anthony Snodgrass that Jamot's late 19th century excavation of a large, probably Archaic temple within the later Kastro points to the Classical Agora lying in this neighbourhood.

The second constructional disturbance above the ancient city, on the rim of the steep cliff separating the lowland town from the modern village, sheds further light on the late Classical-Hellenistic city wall extension which Bozidar Slapsak had been tracing from the valley bottom up to this point in previous seasons. A striking degree of survival of this wall, which in the upper portions is entirely of mud bricks, led to detailed cleaning and recording of this almost unique phenomenon. Nonetheless, so far little trace has been recorded of extensive or long-lasting occupation of the large area north of the river Kanavaris enclosed by this extension to the original city south of the river, and what has been found of likely domestic use is of Hellenistic age. These investigations fit well with the overall results of the total ceramic survey of the city carried out in 1985-6, where Archaic-Classical and later Roman finds from the extension zone have been suggested to form burial areas. It seems that the optimistic replanning of Thespieae in late Classical or Hellenistic times did not result in a permanent expansion of the town, matching the well-evidenced shrinking of the entire city by Early Roman times and the collapse of rural settlement in the inner city hinterland by this date (Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 2007). Important additional evidence has been provided by Professor Catherine Grandjean (University of Tours), who has kindly informed us that the numismatic evidence from Thespieae includes coins believed to originate in the extension sector, and these are of Hellenistic or earliest Roman Imperial age and no later or earlier.

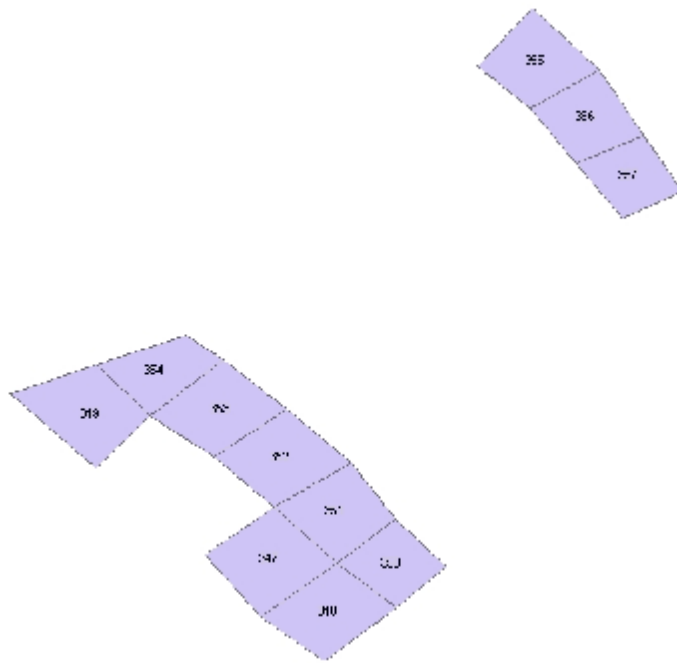
Koroneia

In 2008 the survey grid of 20x20m study squares continued to be extended both further downhill from the Acropolis and also laterally towards the likely edge of the ancient town [FIGURES 1-2]. By the end of the summer season a total of more than 14 hectares of the city has now been studied in this highly-intensive fashion, providing an astounding wealth of surface finds as well as regular discovery of small and larger fragments of ancient architecture, much *in situ*. The process of setting-out the grids, as well as recording the density of surface pottery within them, and any architectural fragments, is now totally paper-less. Leiden computer specialist Bart Noordervliet was able to locate each grid in real space and attach a documentary text record on his palmtop computer, linked to a GPS positioning device [FIGURE 3]. At a later stage Bart and colleague

Janneke van Zwienen returned to the architectural fragments to record them in greater accuracy using a Differential GPS device, which has high spatial resolution as well as providing elevation.



FIGURES 1-2: Location of all survey grids studied by the end of the 2008 field season at Koroneia, on an aerial photograph and the 1/5000 relief map. Recorded and mapped by Bart Noordervliet.



DATE	UNIT	LAND_USE	NAT_VEG	NS	WE	DIST_NS	DIST_WE	DENS_NS	DENS_WE	VISI_NS	VISI_WE	BAGS	FUNCTION	NOTES	
8/27/2008	347	olive grove	wild cereals	pa	bi	20.5	19	295	186	7	6	3	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	348	olive grove	wild cereals	da	ch	25.9	21.4	70	144	2	4	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	349	olive grove	wild cereals	jo	jo	18.9	20	68	77	7	6	1	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	350	olive grove	wild cereals	da	ch	17.6	20.1	81	169	2	5	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	351	olive grove	wild cereals	pa	bi	18.4	17.3	248	187	3	4	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	352	olive grove	wild cereals	jo	jo	20.4	19.5	124	148	5	5	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds, m	
8/27/2008	353	olive grove	wild cereals	da	ch	24.6	19.9	98	132	7	8	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	354	olive grove	wild cereals	jo	jo	23.5	12.6	84	44	8	7	2	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	355	ploughed olive grove	none	pa	bi	20.9	22.5	425	416	10	10	5	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	356	ploughed olive grove	none	da	ch	19.5	20.8	155	381	9	10	5	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	
8/27/2008	357	ploughed olive grove	none	jo	jo	16.2	20	342	168	9	10	5	domestic	cemetery/sanctuary finds	

FIGURE 3: A sample of the digital record from the palmtop field registration in 2008. The location of each grid is tied to its records (Bart Noordervliet)

So far very high ceramic densities have been recorded at Koroneia, although in one small area in the far south of the hill a sudden drop in values probably does mark an extramural area [FIGURE 4]. In the north-east a clear Archaic-Classical cemetery was reached, with figurines and human bone amongst much fineware [FIGURES 5-7]. A similar small area in the north-west may also be a cemetery, or alternatively a sanctuary (the finds await detailed study by Vladimir Stissi). Immediately after the identification of the NE cemetery, another exciting development was the discovery of the edge of the predicted Medieval hamlet which we expected to lie near to the well-known fragmentary Frankish Crusader tower. In fact this domestic site lies just to the south of the tower hillock, overlying the northern edges of the NE Classical cemetery. So far according to our Medieval specialist Athanasios Vionis, the finds are of Frankish-Late Byzantine

rather than pre-tower age. Although the Ottoman tax registers record the existing villages of this district as in place by the 15th century AD (Bintliff 1995), with no clear trace of the Frankish-era village at ancient Koroneia, stray ceramic pieces from the new tower hamlet site of early Ottoman age may point to a piecemeal displacement of the community towards its successor location, the Greek village of Agios Georgios a mere 2 kilometres' distant, or perhaps the survival of a farm at the abandoned village site once the bulk of the population had moved.

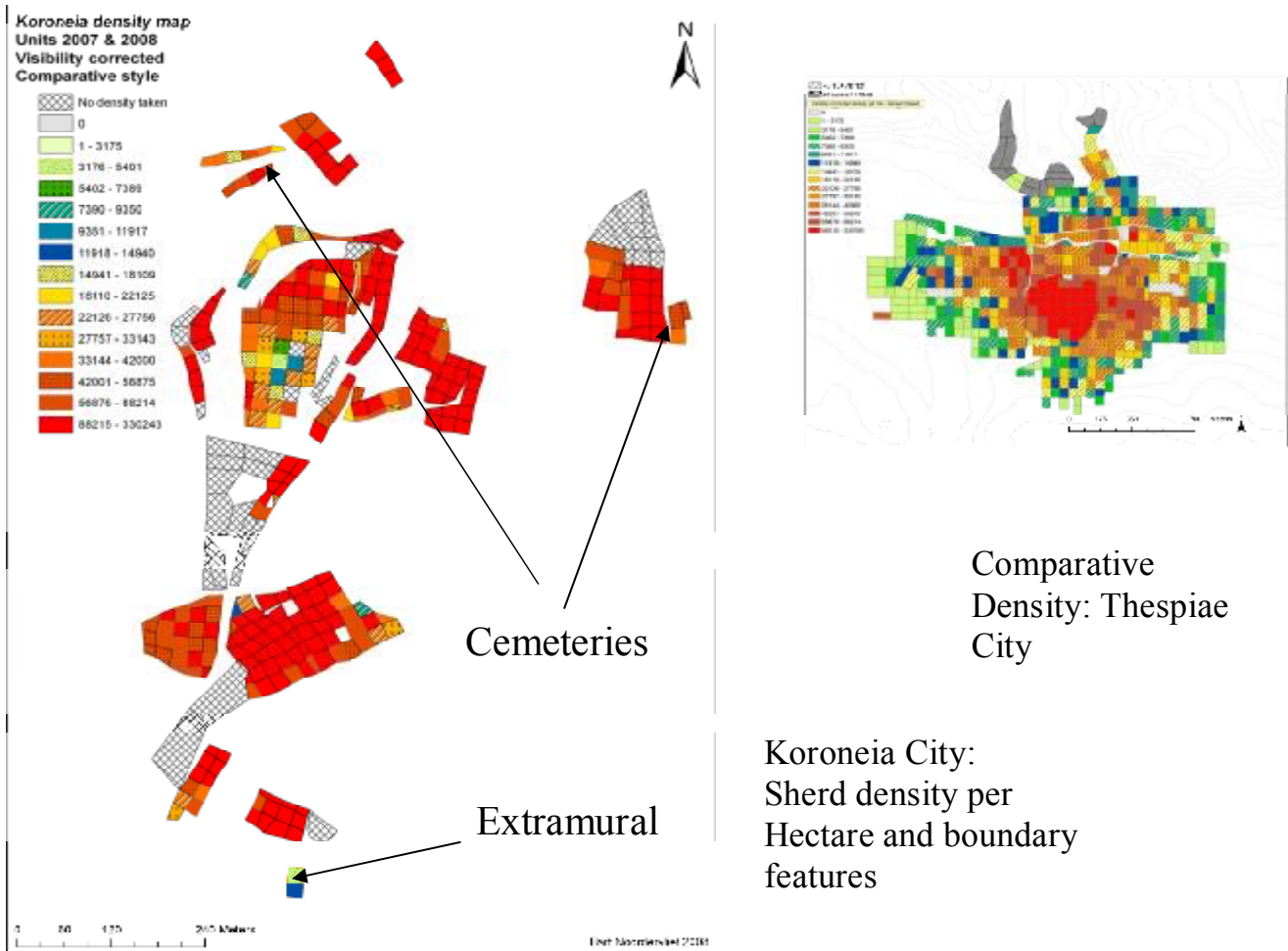


FIGURE 4: The survey grids at Koroneia 2007-8 (left), with their ceramic density, visibility-corrected per hectare, compared on the same scale as that at ancient Thespieae city (right). At three points in 2008 possible city boundaries were located, due to the presence of ancient cemeteries (north) and very low surface densities (south). 'No density' marks areas of dense vegetation, where no quantification of surface finds was possible, but here ceramic samples were taken.



FIGURE 5: The Classical cemetery in the north-east sector of the city hill.



FIGURE 6: The rich finds from the N-E Classical cemetery, the figurines highlighted



FIGURE 7: Human and animal figurines from the NE cemetery

The areas of the ancient city of Koroneia surveyed so far appear to be mostly domestic in character, although the special character of the Acropolis and the supposed Agora plateau on the eastern middle slopes of the hill are easily distinguished by their architectural debris (see preceding issue of *Pharos*). The small size of survey grid we adopted for Koroneia was designed to obtain high-precision detail, but has produced an unexpected result. Since most of the city hill is steep and its surfaces artificially transformed through narrow contour-hugging terraces of likely antique construction, we can suppose that houses lined these terraces in Greco-Roman times in rows just one house wide, allowing for access paths [FIGURE 8]. In our stepwise setting up of small survey grids along these terraces we have been struck by the highly-repetitive and rich assemblages from sequent grids, dominated by a full range of household artefacts (giant

storage vessels, food preparation and consumption pots, beehives, spindle-whorls and loomweights, together with roof, and floor or wall tiles: **FIGURE 9**]. These domestic assemblages are less regularly associated with walls which appear to mark house outlines, or large cut blocks probably identifying house corners or door thresholds [**FIGURE 10**]. These putative house foundations do not follow a single orientation across the city, but there is already evidence that for smaller areas across the hill the foundations are in comparable alignments, pointing to a degree of urban planning within each quarter of the ancient town. More exact documentation of all such wall-fragments by Bart Noordervliet and Janneke van Zwienen may allow us to reconstruct the main lines of the ancient urban plan. For the moment for significant sectors of the city, where the surface is clear of heavy scrub, we face the exciting innovative possibility for surface survey of tracing households across a major ancient town. Ultimate targets for this research could be the analysis of differential wealth within, and the variable development of, each suburb of the city.



FIGURE 8: A typical terrace on the slopes of the city hill, narrowed by slopewash from above.

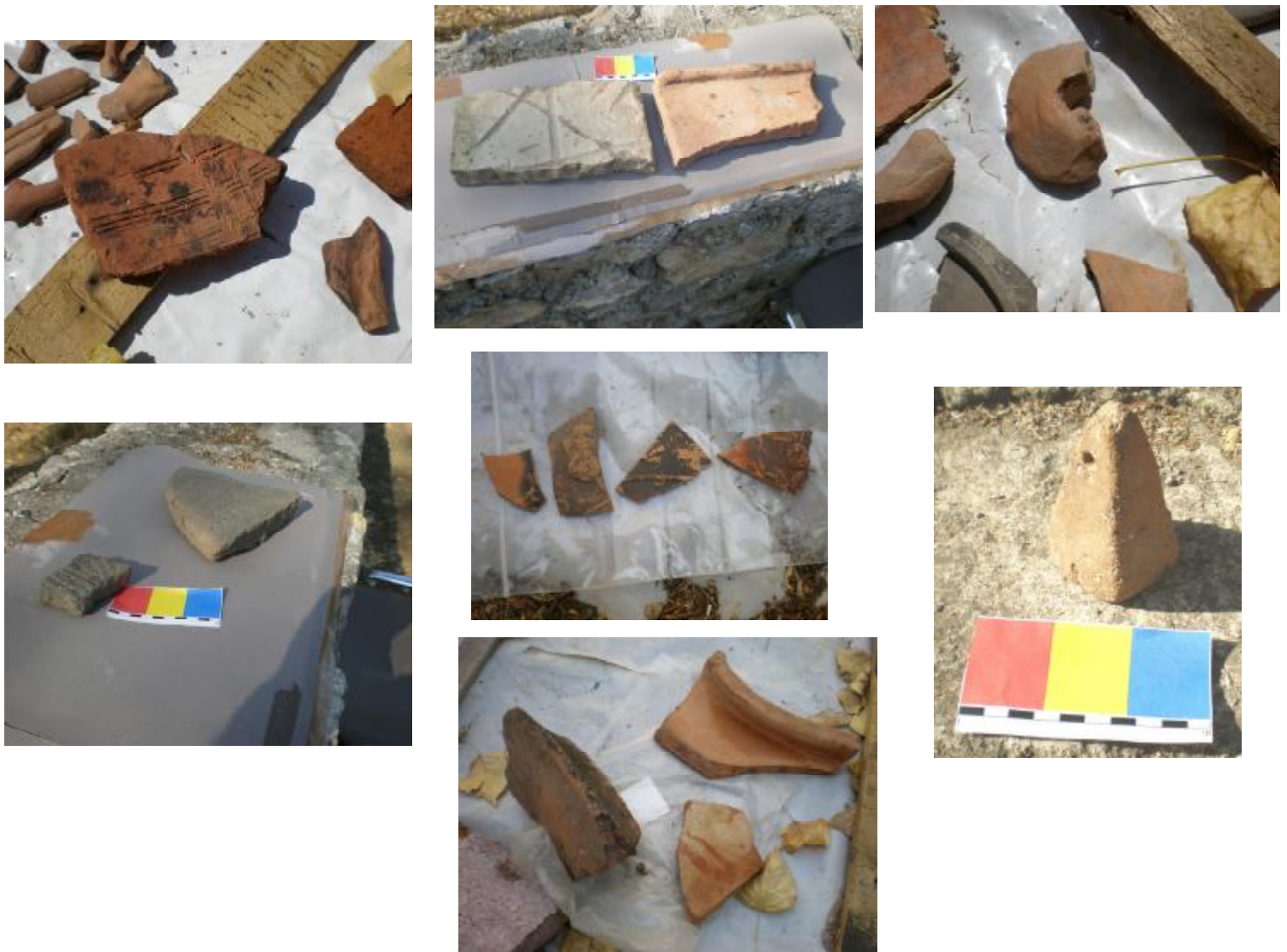


FIGURE 9: Recurrent household assemblages from domestic terraces. Upper row, left to right: beehive, floor-tiles, spindle-whorl. Lower row: stone grinders, moulded tableware and storage jars, a loomweight.



FIGURE 10: Aligned cut blocks along contours seem to mark house foundations, in this case a possible door threshold

Future explorations of the town planning on this irregular steep hill will certainly benefit from comparisons with similar excavated sites, such as the Macedonian Hellenistic-Roman plan of the town of Petres (Adam-Veleni 2000) [FIGURE 11]. Comparisons for the household assemblages are now available from the excellent detailed studies of the house finds from Olynthus (Cahill 2002) and Halieis (Ault 2005).

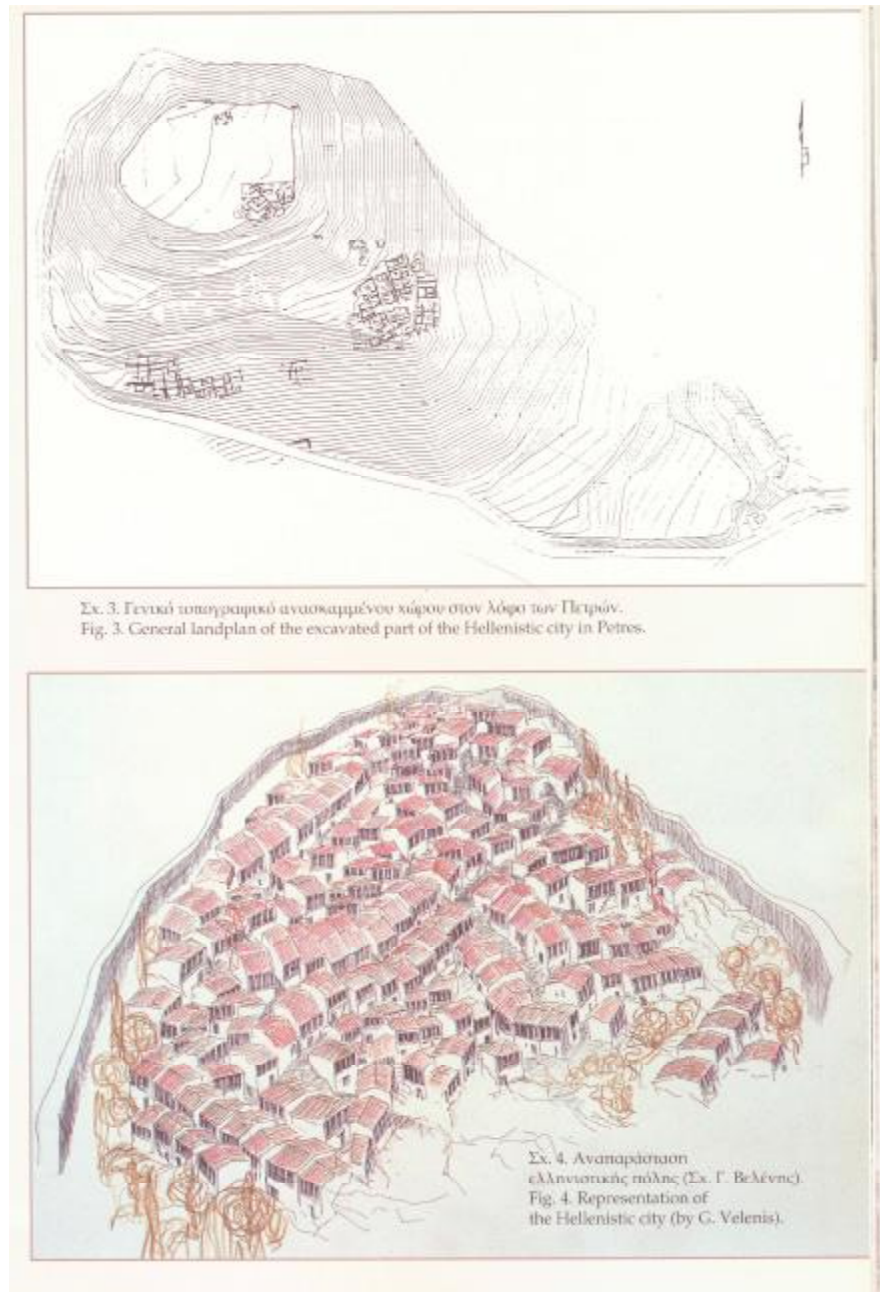


FIGURE 11: Excavated areas of the town at Petres with a suggested reconstruction (Adam-Veleni 2000)

The continuing digital analysis of the city surface will eventually we hope reveal urban planning and access routes, a project being carried out by Noordervliet and van Zwienen. Also researching with the Koroneia survey this year was Dr. Keith Wilkinson and his wife and colleague Myra Hoek-Wilkinson (University of Winchester), who continued their geomorphological analysis of the natural and human-modified features of the city hill. They have confirmed that the large hollow on the eastern side of the hill is definitely not natural, and although no architecture has yet been observed there, this does seem to confirm our own and previous visitors' to the site's proposals to see there the

Theatre of ancient Koroneia. A longer-term aim is to reconstruct how the hill looked before human engineering in antiquity created a well-managed built-environment on its innumerable terraces.

One final mini-project is worth mentioning. A pre-war report by the famous Boeotian topographer Siegfried Lauffer (1986) recorded several fragments of a Roman aqueduct running northwards for several kilometres, from the lower slopes of Mount Helicon by the modern village of Koroneia, to the edge of the ancient city. A brief field visit along the predicted line described by Lauffer [FIGURE 12] did not reveal any standing ruins, but future fieldwork should be carried out to trace this potentially very important evidence of Roman improvements to the urban amenities of a city already known from inscriptions to have been favoured more than once by an Emperor's benevolent intervention (Fossey 1988). One positive result from this brief excursion towards the mountainous rim of the Koroneia basin was the observation that even high up in the valley sides far from the city, Classical surface finds are extremely plentiful, indicating as elsewhere in Boeotia (Bintliff 1997) that land use was at its peak in this time.



FIGURE 12: Putative line of the Roman aqueduct supplying Koroneia from Mount Helicon.

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