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**The Leiden University Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project:
2005 season at Tanagra**

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THE LEIDEN UNIVERSITY ANCIENT CITIES OF BOEOTIA PROJECT

2005 Season at Tanagra*

John Bintliff

Surface Field Survey

In 2004 owing to the extra pressure on the Ephoreia in Thebes due to the Olympic Games, the Project had carried out a non-collecting prospection of parts of the rural countryside or Chora of ancient Tanagra city in Eastern Boeotia. In 2005 the main aim of the surface survey team under the direction of Bintliff and Sbonias was to revisit the field transects studied in 2004 and collect a representative sample of surface potsherds, both offsite continuous collection and also from rural sites identified in 2004.

The first zone restudied lay some 2-3 kilometres south of Tanagra, in the fertile olive groves at the foot of the plateau on which are placed the modern villages of Agios Thomas and Kleidi (fig. 1, isolated transect on the righthand of the figure, or east). No definite sites had been found here in 2004, but dense offsite ceramic scatters indicating high intensity land use (manuring debris), whose age should be determined from a sample of this material. At this distance from Tanagra such dense finds could emanate both from rubbish disposal out of the city but also from suspected village settlement on and around the modern villages, where plentiful signs of occupation have been noted during previous research¹. These finds await study during the 2006 season by our ceramics' experts (Dr K.Sarri, Athens, for prehistory; Prof. V. Stissi, Amsterdam, for Geometric to Hellenistic; Dr J. Poblome, Leuven, for Roman; A. Vionis, Leiden, for Medieval to Post-Medieval).

* The Editorial Board of *Pharos* regret that some information contained in the illustrations is lost, because it was impossible to print them in colour. The full article with the original colour illustrations can be viewed on the site of the Netherlands Institute in Athens: www.nia.gr/pharos13.htm.

¹ Fossey, J. M. 1988. *Topography and Population of Ancient Boeotia*. Chicago.

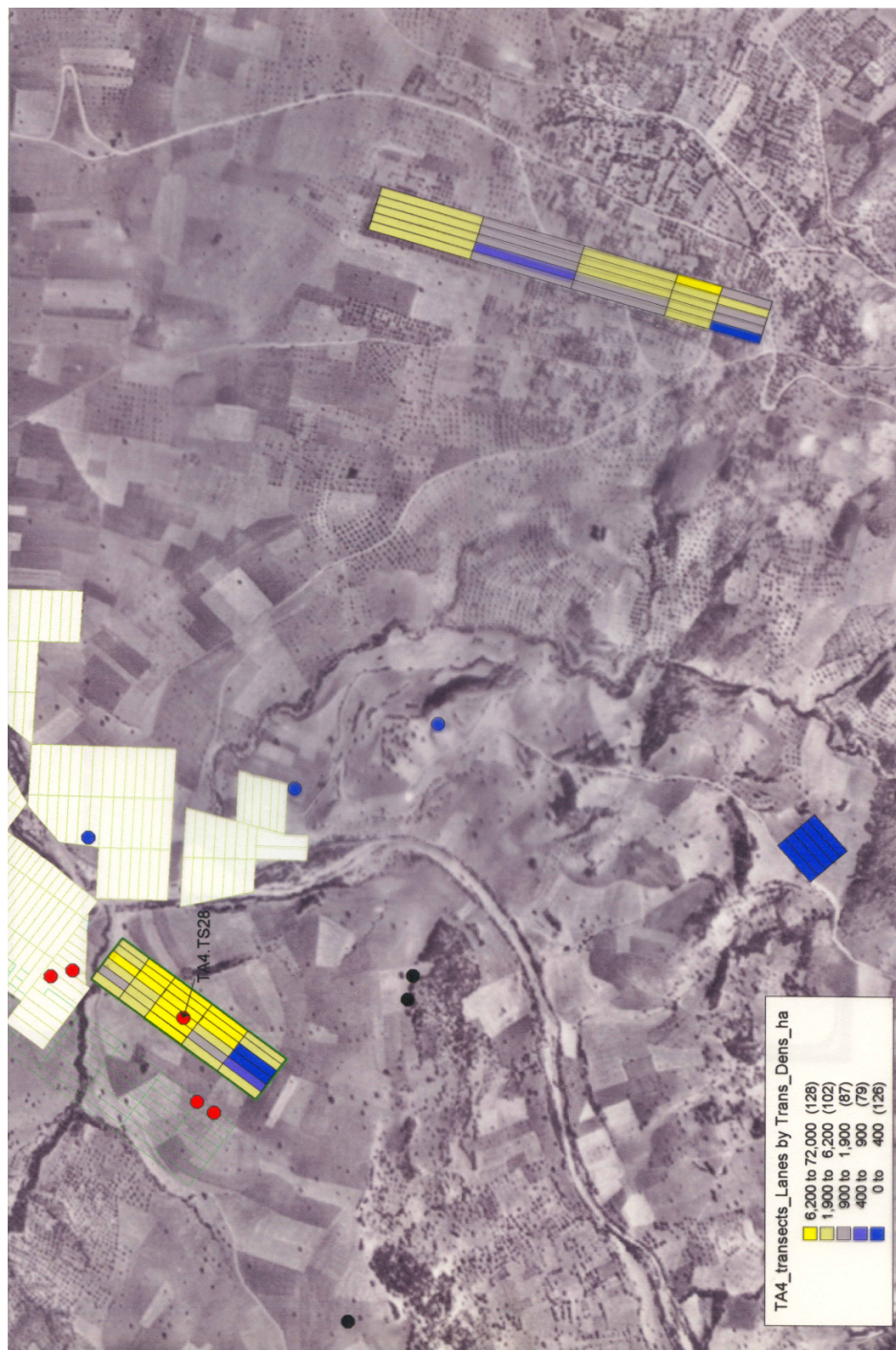


Figure 1

A kilometre to the west of this sector, around the same distance from the City, a Roman villa site discovered in 2004 was gridded and sampled, site TS28 (fig. 1, on the lefthand of the figure), during which a small Classical cemetery beside it was recognised, perhaps associated with an older, Classical phase of the villa. A transect was rewalked between this villa site and a Byzantine hamlet studied in earlier seasons, site TS15 (marked by two linked black dots to the south of TS28 on the figure).

On the far, southern side of the Agios Thomas and Kleidi villages lies an upland region of considerable fertility, where long transects had been walked in 2004 and this time a series of rural sites had been identified, Classical farms, Roman farms and villas, and several Byzantine hamlets (figs 2 & 3). The 2005 work here, some 6-8 kilometres out from ancient Tanagra, was firstly to take samples of the offsite ceramics, which were far lower in density than closer to the City, and secondly to grid and take samples from the rural sites. Whereas the offsite ceramics up to 3 kilometres or a half-hour travel out from the City are very dense (on average 1-2 sherds per square metre according to our GIS and database specialist Emeri Farinetti, Leiden), reflecting manuring spreads out of the City and nearby ancient villages, in the outer chora we see that the offsite ceramics are focussed immediately around rural sites, even if for several hundred metres, then almost nothing has been deposited further from sites proper. This pattern suggests something different from the inner Chora – that offsite pottery is essentially spread out from rural sites in the first ten minutes or so from their core, as a mixed product of disturbance by plough and weather, and deliberate infield manuring. Since the inner Chora also includes rural sites, separating the contribution of City manuring and spreads produced from rural sites themselves there, is highly complex, whereas here in the outer Chora we can assist that task because only one component is present. Thus samples were taken continuously along a retransect through the valley running south-east from Agios Thomas, and in the valley running north-west between Thomas and its near-neighbour village of Kleidi.

In the first of these valleys (fig. 2, righthand or eastern sector), a grid was placed and surface find samples taken from a large Roman villa of TS42, a medium-sized Greco-Roman farm at TS29, a small Classical farm at TS33, and over the substantial hamlet of Byzantine and Frankish age at TS30, the chapel of Agios Demetrios. A small Classical farm at the edge of TS30 (TS44) will be sampled in 2006.

In the adjacent valley between the two modern villages (fig. 3, lefthand or western sector of the figure) a gridded sample collection was made at the small Classical farm of TS34, a large Roman villa site at TS39, and a double-site combining a small Classical and small Roman farmstead lying side by side at TS37. Immediately below Kleidi village and to its north-west, we sampled a small Byzantine hamlet – site TS36 (fig. 4, isolated transect far left of the figure).

The ceramics collected from all these rural sites and their surrounding landscape offsite scatters will be studied in 2006, but we can already confirm that the outer chora areas (figs 2-4) show rubbish disposal confined to the periphery and infield cultivation zones around sites, it seems entirely originating from those sites and not from further afield. This will enable us to refine how such material finds its way from the core of rural settlements into the countryside around.

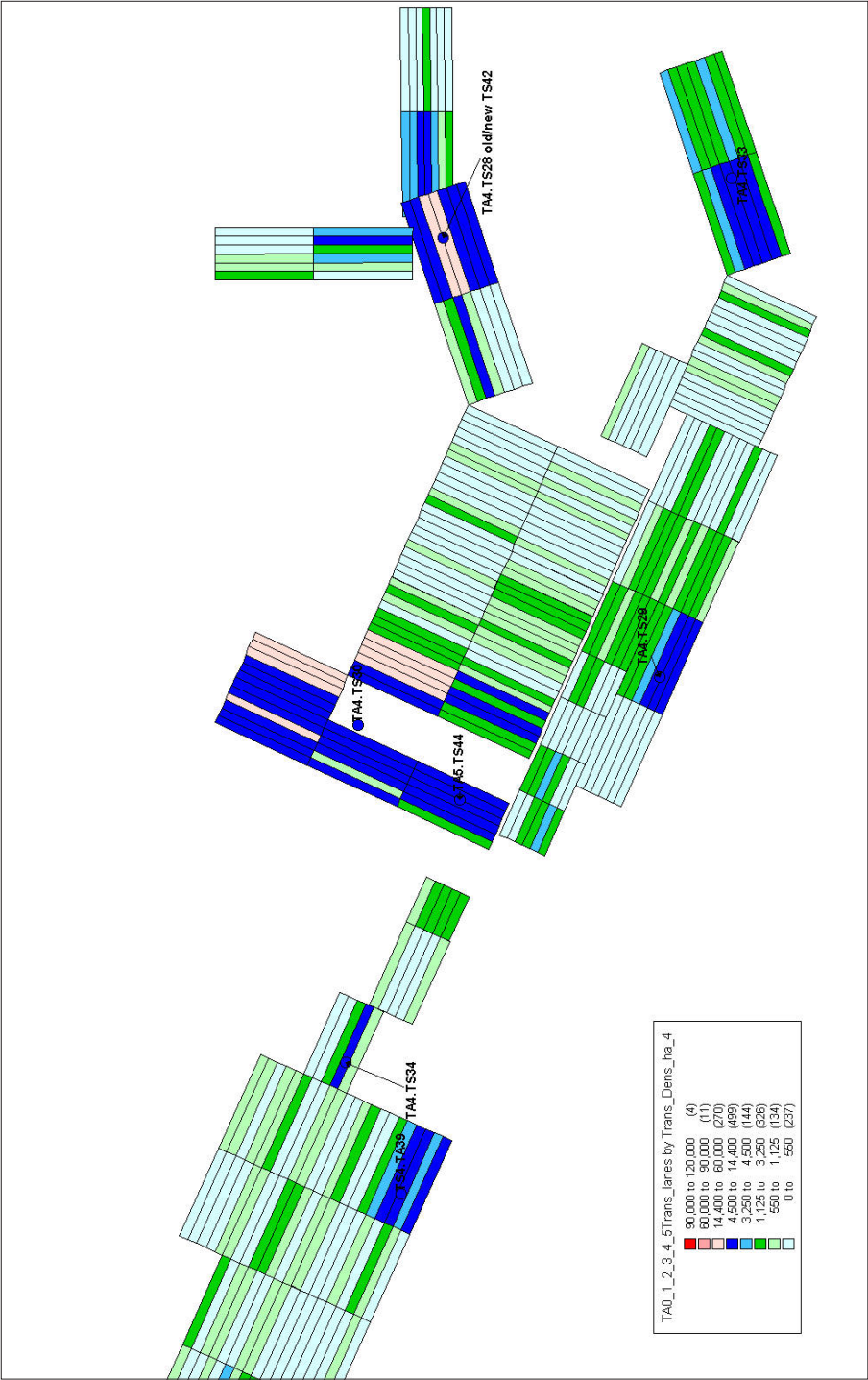


Figure 2

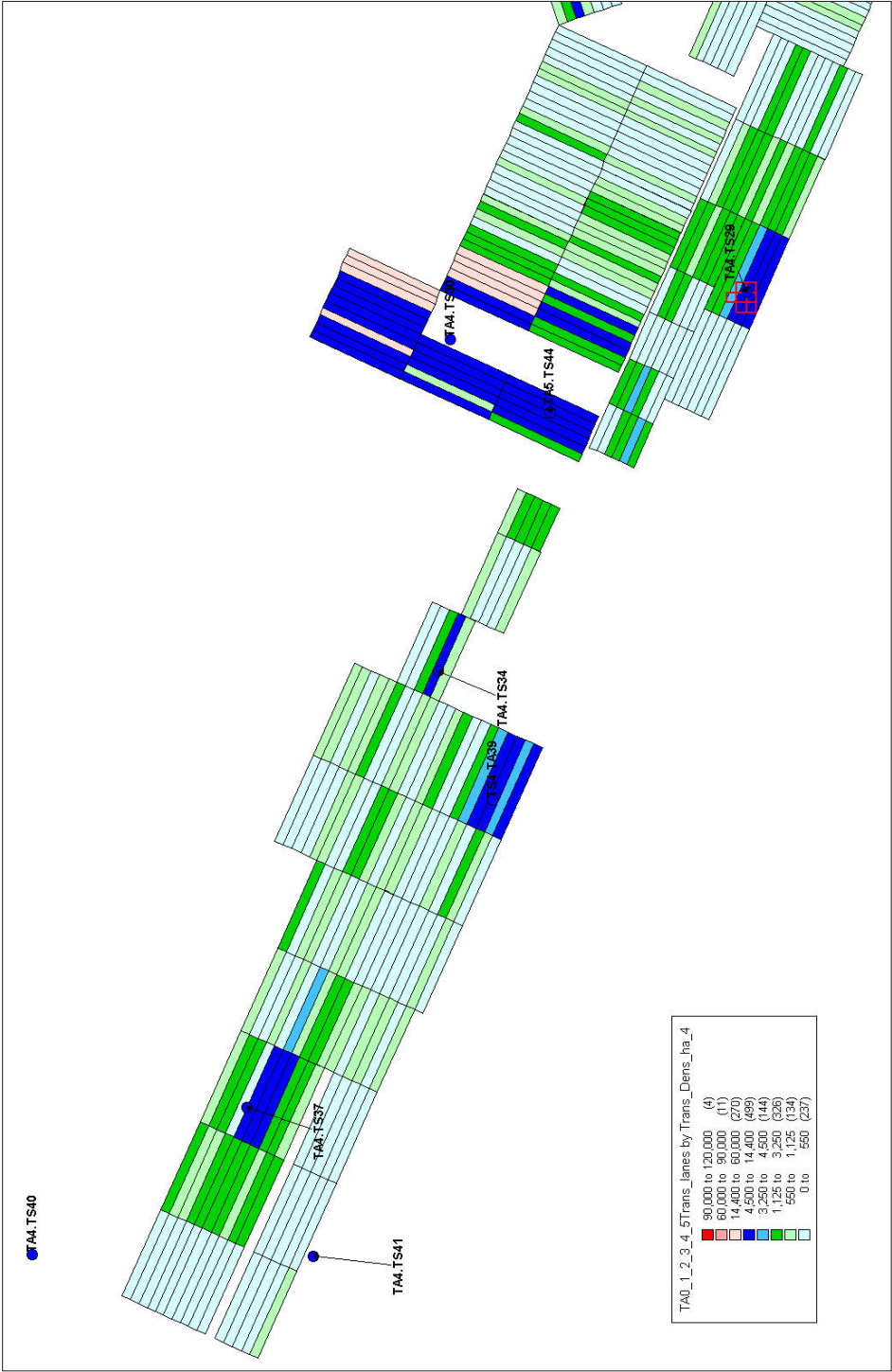


Figure 3

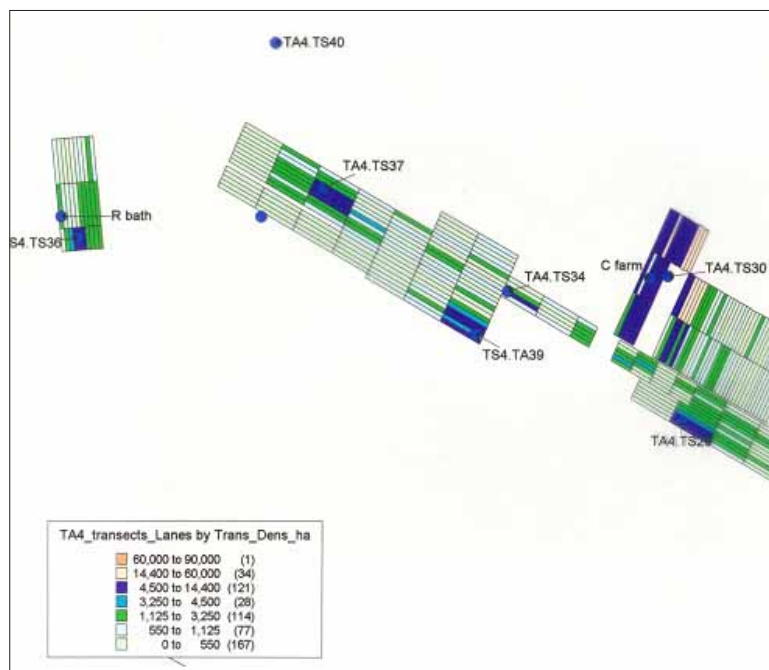


Figure 4.

Finally, a more remote Byzantine-Frankish hamlet, to the north-east of the area shown in fig. 2, around the church of Agia Anna, was gridded and sampled by our medieval specialist A. Vionis. This is just one of a series of 7 similar 10th-14th century rural nucleated settlements we have discovered in the hinterland of Tanagra, and whose study by Vionis will contribute greatly to our reconstruction of rural history in this period of expanding population and economy.

The City Topography Mapping

Whilst the rural survey team restudied sites from 2004, the City internal topography analysis continued under the direction of Professor Bozidar Slapsak. The aim of this subproject is to 'groundtruth' parts of the City where the geophysical plan of the townplan has shown important unknown buildings or intriguing architectural overlays pointing to changes in the layout of insulae or City blocs. Work continued from 2004 on one of the two large Early Christian basilican churches in the upper centre of the town, the East Basilica (fig. 5, in insula 2/4). The plan of this 3-aisled church together with an annexe to its north-west was very clear from the geophysics, although never observed previously from surface architecture (fig. 6), but once the surface plants were cleared, a remarkable series of small architectural fragments was plotted across the basilica surface (figs 7 & 8), marking recognisable parts of the church. Other areas were cleared and studied on the surface, to clarify the transformation of the original regular house insulae, set up in the 4th century BC, during Roman times into more varied house plans by late Antiquity, pointing to more visible social differentiation in post-Classical Greek times.



Figure 5

The Geophysical Prospection

Under the joint direction of Professor Slapsak and Geophysical specialist Dr. Brane Music (Ljubljana), the geoprosection team continued work both within the standing City walls, and on the outside of these walls to the north-west and north. The interior of the walled town is almost entirely studied now by a variety of techniques – magnetometry, resistivity, georadar, and the underlying late Classical Hippodamian townplan still dominates the images. Till this year we had assumed that Tanagra formed an exception to other Boeotian Greco-Roman cities studied by

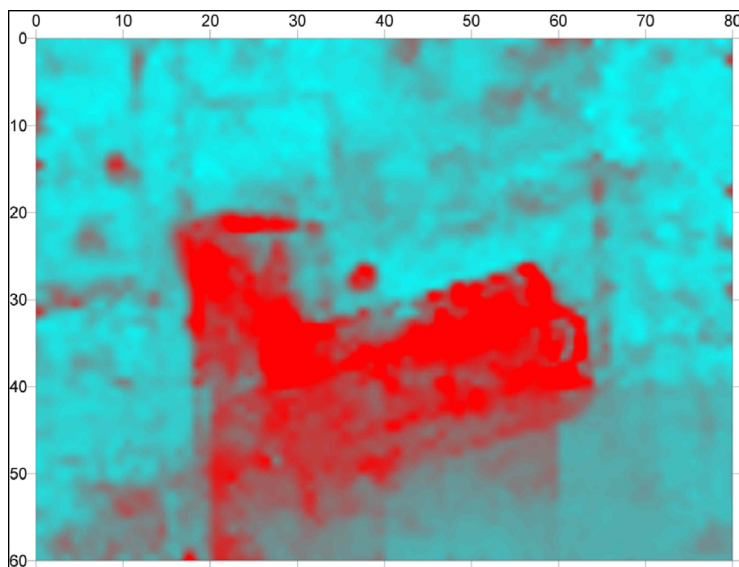


Figure 6

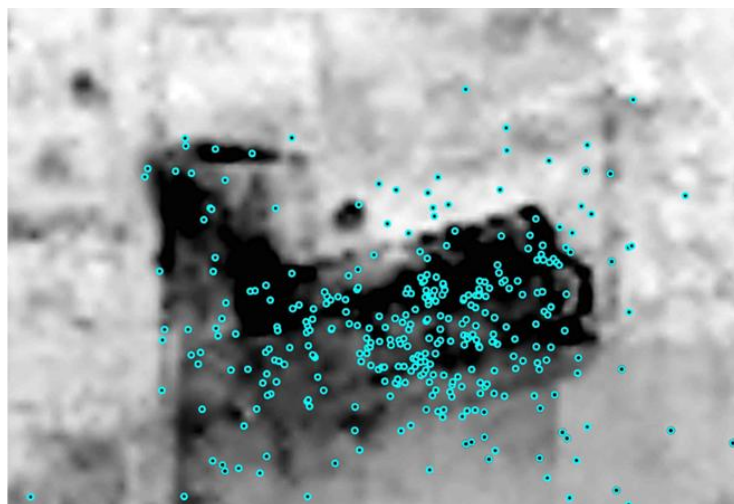


Figure 7

Bintliff in an earlier project (the Cambridge-Durham Boeotia Project)², where Roman rule was linked with a shrinkage of Classical Greek city size. The ca. 30 hectares enclosed by the standing Tanagra walls had clearly been rebuilt in Late Roman times in response to barbarian threats, but this large area with its internal street grid appeared to represent a rewalling on the lines of

² Bintliff, J. L. & A. M. Snodgrass 1988. Mediterranean survey and the city. *Antiquity* 62, 57-71.



Figure 8



Figure 9

the Classical Greek walls. Slapsak has shown in 2004-5 that these late walls were in many areas rebuilt from the foundations up, but the revelation of 2005 from the geophysical work beyond the late wall to the north was that the 4th century BC insulae continue outside this wall (fig. 9). It is now possible that the Greek City was once larger, and an area at least one City bloc long, north-south, was abandoned by late Antiquity when the town was rewallled. A fragment of the original Greek wall was tentatively identified further to the north of these extramural insulae. On the other hand, the plots for the north-west extramural area show no blocs, rather a road outside of a late Antique ditch which runs parallel to the Late Roman wall. A further and related observation comes from the new plots just inside the north-east wall, where no insulae are observed. A large open area, partly cut in two by the late rewalling, is now suggested to be a Lower Agora, to complement the Upper Agora previously identified in the south-west of the upper City (fig. 5).

These unexpected discoveries, although compatible with settlement area shrinkage at Roman Thespieae, Hyettos and Askra elsewhere in Boeotia, will require surface collection in 2006 in the north extramural sector, to determine the last occupation phase of the additional insulae left outside of the rewalling. Although it is also conceivable, that only part of the Roman town was defended in late Antiquity (as shown by the kastro within Late Roman Thespieae), it is more likely that the unenclosed blocs were unoccupied by this period. The two alternatives will be tested in 2006.

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