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Boeotian landscapes. A GIS-based study for the reconstruction and interpretation of the archaeological datasets of ancient Boeotia.

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PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My love for ancient Greece began early in my life on the occasion of a visit to ancient Olympia with my parents, but decisive for the directions that my studies took later was a university training trip in 1995. Then, the patient guide Professor Anna Sacconi and Professor Luis Godart along with the local expertise of Professor Vassileos Aravantinos, director of the local archaeological service (8th Ephorate of Classical Antiquities), introduced me to the intriguing and fascinating world of ancient Boeotia. My first meeting with Professor John Bintliff and his team, at that time surveying in the area of ancient Hyettos, widened my scientific horizon towards the potential of GIS and of the interdisciplinary and diachronical study of the landscape.

The random discoveries of traces of ancient activities which occurred in the wider Boeotia region, jointly with the several windows of the landscape hovered by intensive and systematic surveys, increased the urge to contextualise the intensive surveys carried out in various parts of Boeotia within the context of the wider region, organically collecting the available archaeological record coming from a variety of sources. In order to do this, a local level of analysis was to be combined with a broad regional perspective, focusing on changes in the settlement dynamics within the micro-regions of Boeotia. My personal involvement in the intensive survey project which was being conducted by the University of Leiden in the area of ancient Tanagra allowed me to personally experience the ground and the landscape of Boeotia, and gave me basic insights on the potential biases in the recovery of archaeological data in the region.

I would not have been able to pursue this challenge without the support of many people.

This work has benefited from discussions with Professor John Bintliff (Leiden University), academic supervisor of the work. He is gratefully thanked for introducing me to landscape archaeology and sharing with me his large knowledge of Boeotian landscape history and his thoughts on diverse approaches to landscape biographies.

I am most grateful to Dr. Hans Kamermans (Leiden University), co-supervisor of the work, who advised me on GIS techniques and literature and always encouraged me, and also to Professor Nicola Terrenato (University of Michigan), a later but precious and critical reader of this work, who helped me to improve and polish my text.

Special thanks should be expressed to Professor Vassileos Aravantinos, director of the local archaeological service for Classical antiquities, who first introduced me to Boeotian archaeology and gave me the opportunity to become involved in several excavations

and research projects in the region and to experience life and study at the Thebes museum. For the latter I would like to thank also his wife, Professor Margherita Bonanno (Tor Vergata University – Rome), and all the archaeologists and conservatories of the 8th Ephorate. This research was planned since the beginning to also have as a final product a computerized interactive database, which could be made available to the local archaeological service as an easily searchable and updatable cultural heritage management tool. I hope to be able in this way to recompense them for their precious help.

My first Boeotian experience was led and had benefited from people who introduced me to historical thoughts: Professor Domenico Musti (La Sapienza University – Rome), precious scientific guide of my early research on Boeotia and always reference in the later development, Dr. Maria Rocchi (National Council of Research – Rome) and Professor Pietro Vannicelli (Urbino University). They all deserve my special thanks.

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A special thank is due also to Drs. Giacomo Pardini, colleague and friend, who helped in the realization of the cover drawing, free rendering of an Orchomenian coin type from the 4th C BC showing the shield symbol of the Boeotian confederation with a grain ear along the vertical centreline, chosen as a symbol of Boeotia (the shield) and its human landscape (the grain ear).

I am grateful to Dr. Jonathan Tomlinson for checking the English language and proof-reading the text, and to Drs. Rinse Willet and Drs. Karin Schuitema for translating into Dutch the abstract of the thesis.

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