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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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II.3

The *chorai* of Boeotia

As mentioned earlier, cultural and environmental landscape data concerning Boeotia are gathered, in the present work, according to *chorai* (fig.1 in chapter I.2.2). This implies an approach to ancient *polis*' territories as a focus for analysing settlement systems (see chapter I.2.2 for methodological implications).

In the following chapters, landscape data concerning each individual *chora* will be presented, illustrated and commented upon.

The *chorai* belonging to the Copais area will be presented first, in a geographically clockwise order; then the *chorai* of Central and Eastern Boeotia will follow.

Each individual *chora* chapter will be structured as follows:

- A narrative/qualitative illustration/topographical description of the physical topographical characteristics, along with a 'physical land units and land evaluation' section, in order to present and describe 'quantitatively' the landscape ('landscape in numbers') and its potential.
- A discussion of the boundaries of the *chora*, based on information available from ancient sources and epigraphical documents, as well as from other scholars' reasoning.
- A section 'Archaeological record', in which the archaeological evidence available is listed briefly according to toponyms and corresponding components. The archaeological record for each *chora* is presented in detail and discussed in appendix I (on CD-ROM), along with the description of the *activity loci* and *components*. Its final version can be defined as a sort of deconstructed-reconstructed version of what could traditionally be a 'catalogue of sites' (see chapter I.2.2). The description of each component group (*activity locus/site* – according to toponym) typically includes: a general description of location (or a brief topographical introduction when available); a brief history of research at the site along with a description of the process of component formation/'construction' and a brief 'source critique'; interpretive remarks and discussion. In some cases, some components are grouped in the presentation and discussion. This happens either when they share the same location (according to toponym), representing different phases and/or character of occupation of the same *activity locus*, or when they present common issues

(in the latter case, the same component may also appear in different sections of the text, which discuss common problems). This grouping according to toponym allows for a description of archaeological evidence and issues which can be compared with the traditional gazetteer of sites, though conceptually different, as they are the result of the deconstructing-constructing process. In this way the cycle is closed from site to site again (see also chapter I.2.2). For each site, the main bibliographical references are mentioned in the text, and more can be found in the database under each component, or in the bibliographical reference quoted in the present work¹. Components are listed in topographical order, starting from the main centre (usually the *polis*) of the *chora*².

- Following the list of components, in each chapter's 'Archaeological record' section the archaeological record available is discussed as a whole according to the data sources and available information which produced it, and datasets' biases will be discussed³. Afterwards, landscape themes are investigated and landscape issues are discussed. Addressed questions could be: *what to do with the archaeological dataset available? What does the available dataset mean in terms of landscape?*

In the case of *chorai* which have been investigated (even partially) by intensive artefact surface survey, data are briefly presented in the corresponding appendix. In the present work, I have inserted into the survey sites database only the artefact concentrations securely dated⁴, mostly from preliminary reports (never fully and systematically published, or currently being published). A

¹ In several cases, for instance, the reference to Fossey 1988, or other updated accounts, refers to the list of accounts reported there.

² *Component* numbering is given in an automated way by the software. It does not, therefore, strictly follow the topographical order.

³ Mainly through statistical analysis which can be carried out on the research carried out in the area, such as queries and graphs on the database's 'Discovery' field, and on the proportion of rescue excavation and excavation and surveys (extensive/topographical work), or queries on the amount of known components per period, etc. Proximity to the modern road network is also used to investigate biases.

⁴ Only the sites that were clearly datable (including only their main period of occupation) were included, in order to avoid the risk of using data which could change dramatically following a more in-depth examination of their composition.

special case is represented by Tanagra *chora*, for which a separate section has been created (in appendix I.14) in order to present data and results of the Tanagra Survey Project, for which freshly collected and critically monitored data are available to me as a member of the research project.

In the final section, some landscape issues will be discussed period by period, throwing light especially on some Prehistoric period (generally Neolithic and Bronze Age) and Historical trends. The *chora* by *chora* discussion could seem methodologically unsuitable for Prehistoric occupation, yet a critical examination and a general interpretation of the Prehistoric landscape within each *chora* facilitates the understanding of diachronical

processes which took place at the micro-regional level. As for the Historical periods; different segments of the human landscape will be examined when information is available (town level, village level, cult places, rural occupation, etc.). Activity foci that are not clearly recognisable are also discussed, and questions are addressed. Addressed questions could be: *what can we do with this undetermined evidence? How can we look at them in terms of 'landscape'?*

Furthermore, some trajectories of the landscape in the long-term are commented upon, and actual or potential settlement chambers within the *chora* are highlighted, according to the regional and micro-regional approach to the landscape illustrated in chapter I.1.