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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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Citation

Farinetti, E. (2009, December 2). *Boeotian landscapes. A GIS-based study for the reconstruction and interpretation of the archaeological datasets of ancient Boeotia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/14500>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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II.3.9

Eastern Helicon: Thespiae

TOPOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The area under the control of the ancient city of Thespiae is not a unified and uniform plain, but rather a mixture of river valleys and intervening hills. It was heavily settled in modern times.

The ancient city of Thespiae and the surrounding areas (including the modern villages of Neochori and Ellopia) belong to what has been called ‘the Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes’ (see chapter II.1 and Philippson 1951: 502). The proper basin of Thespiae (constituting the ‘central basin’ of the Tertiary *tafel*¹) extends from the turn of the Askris river (the abrupt turn that the river makes around a spur of Helicon running E-W – Palaiokarandas) to the W to where the Asopos river begins towards the E. It seems possible that the river Askris once constituted the upper part of Asopos (see chapter II.1).

To the S the basin is bordered by the Livadostra/Stavropotamos river, which has its source in a basin (2-3km; 280m asl) by the modern village of Kaparelli, at the foot of Kithairon (see chapter II.3.11). The basin is bordered to the E by a Tertiary *tafel* divided into several valleys (360m asl). The *tafel* comes out from the mountains at the village of Kriekouki/Erithrai and extends to the S towards the Asopos (Philippson 1951: 504). The Livadostra river valley extends towards the E, and flows along the foot of Kithairon in a wide cultivated valley (200m asl) by the village of Kaparelli. Further to the W the valley becomes narrower and deep, with banks covered with trees, and it turns to the SW between Korombili and Kithairon to reach the sea in a small plain by the few houses of Livadostra². The W coast of the gulf of Livadostra comes in a direct line to Cape Patima, closing the wider bay to the SW. More complex and varied is the E coast reached by stream valleys from Kithairon, which today belong to the village of Kaparelli³, until Cape Punta, which closes the wider gulf to the SE (Philippson 1951: 505). The Livadostra gulf is 5km wide and cuts deeply into the land. It is open to the S wind, with the exception of Ag.Vassileos bay (Philippson 1951: 206).

The Northern uplands of the Tertiary *Tafel* of Thebes (Philippson 1951: 506-7 – iBc), running with continuous steep edges W to SE from behind Haliartos, at the edge of

Helicon, up to Thebes and the Soros, separates the Parasopia and Thespieae areas from the central plains of Boeotia. On the *Tafel* are the villages of Mavromati and Vagia. To the W of Thebes up to Vagia this upland ridge goes further into the basin forming promontories and spurs. Behind the ridge, at the E edge of Helicon, is the Askris river, which, after emerging from the Valley of the Muses, runs in a SE direction across a soft, wide and very fertile tertiary valley, at the edge of which is the village of Palaiopanagia/Askri. At the foot of the edges of Helicon, where it turns to the W, lies the village of Neochori. After Neochori, the Askris river crosses a plain similar to that below Parapungia/Leuktra on the other edge of the basin. The village of Neochori lies at the starting point of a ridge jutting out from Helicon and ending in the Thespieae basin with the Palaiokarandas spur, around which the Askris river turns (Philippson 1951: 453), changing the direction of its course from NW-SE to NE-SW. Flowing towards the Domvraina basin, the river meets a rounded limestone ridge which leads the river into a small valley before entering (by Ellopia village) the Xironomi basin and crossing a series of small valleys opening to the N (Philippson 1951: 459). There is a slightly marked low watershed between the rivers Askra and Kanavaris to the W of ancient Thespieae. The Kanavaris flows towards the E and becomes larger, taking water from several springs in the plain (see Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007), where the ancient city of Thespieae lies; afterwards it flows in its narrow valley through the hills, and emerges into the Aeonian plain ca 4km W of Thebes. The road from Thebes to Thespieae and Domvraina follows the Kanavaris valley as probably the ancient route did (fig.1). Two villages (Erimokastro/Thespies and Kaskavelli/Leondari) are situated on the edge of the Tertiary *tafel*, before the site of the ancient *polis* of Thespieae.

The so-called Valley of the Muses can be considered to be a small self-contained landscape within the wider area, opening into the Helicon massif in a SE-NW direction to the NW of ancient Thespieae, including at its SE the modern village of Askri.

Boundaries

The boundaries of the *chora* are clearly definable to the W and the S: to the W Mt.Helicon, to the S the Kithairon,

¹ See appendix II: iBb and Philippson 1951: 506 (iBb).

² In this plain are the remains of ancient Kreuzis, see below in text.

³ The harbour used by the inhabitants of Kaparelli today is not Livadostra but Ag.Vassileos.

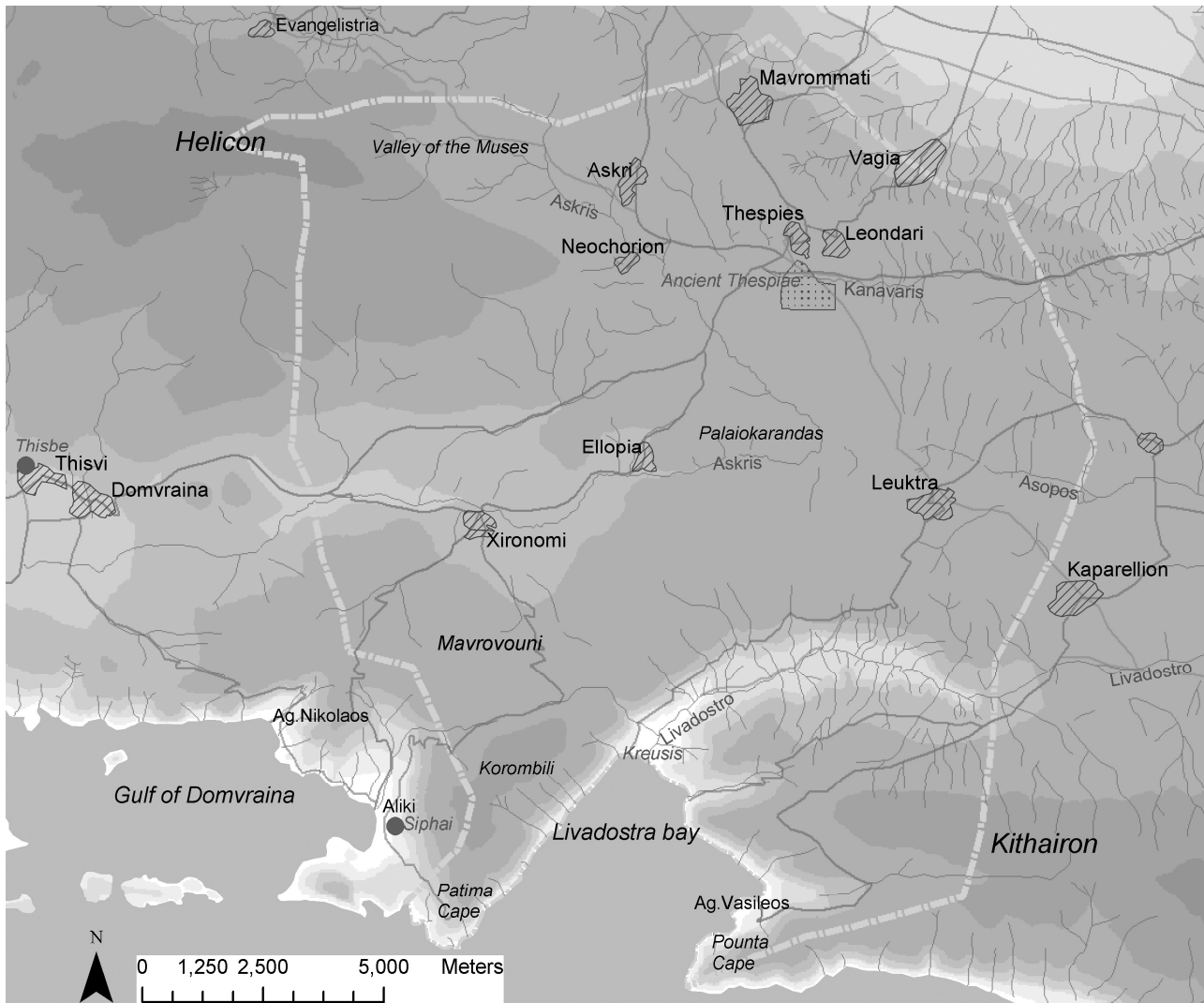


Fig.1. Topographical setting of the chora of Thespieae.

the Corinthian gulf and the Western ridge of Mount Korombili (Fossey 1988: 164). Conversely, to the E the boundary with Plataea and Thebes is not easily definable, as no clear topographical feature marks it, and only a sequence of low hills separates the bulk of the Asopos valley (belonging to Plataea and the Parasopia chora) from the Thespian plains proper; to the N the border with the chora of Thebes is even less clear; as Fossey (1988: 165) points out, it seems logical to include in the Thespie area the area of the Vagia and Mavrommati villages, i.e. the N slopes of the chain of hills on which these villages stand, above the Teneric plain which Roesch (1965: 52 n.5) would give to Thebes and partly to Haliartos (its W swampy land). On the other hand, to judge from the loss of small sites after Haliartos' defeat by the Romans (171 BC), the border to Haliartos seems to be S rather than N of Mavrommati village⁴.

In antiquity, the boundary between the *chorai* of Thespieae and Thisbe⁵ could have been marked by a dam, as suggested by Knauss (1992), who writes: “The small prehistoric dam may have marked the boundary between the territories of Thespiiai and Thisbe in later antiquity just as did the old barrages at Tegea, Mantinea and Orkhomeos in Arkadia. The Donakon, the reed-bed in the reservoir of the small dam, was situated in the territory of Thespiiai as Pausania says”.

PHYSICAL LAND UNITS

Hilly landscape is predominant, and this is mainly due to the elevation range within which the majority of the chora lies, marking the landscape with more or less flat inner upland basins and valleys, where often no visible river flows. Within the hilly landscape, the predominant physiographical class is therefore constituted by plateau and gentle slope features (classes H1 and H2). H3 and H4

⁴ This is the picture which seems to emerge from the systematic survey carried out in the area (Boeotia Survey Project) – see fig.3.

⁵ The territory of Thisbe is included in the present work in the discussion on the Boeotian areas to the Gulf of Corinth (see chapter).

features mark the lateral slopes of the valleys and watersheds.

The mountainous segment is represented by the Helicon slopes and peaks, which mark the W end of the *chora* landscape, while plain landscape is represented only in the Livadostro valley and bay and by the lower valley of the Askris river towards the Domvraina basin, when the elevation range drops (fig.2 in chapter II.1).

<i>Hilly landscape</i>	79%
<i>Mountainous landscape</i>	11.7%
<i>Plain</i>	9.3%

1	P1_P2	lacustrine basin, valley	3.5%
2	P3	gentle slope	0.5%
3	P4	foothill	5.3%
4	H1	plateau	29%
5	H2	gentle slope	8.7%
6	H3	moderate slope	16.8%
7	H4	severe slope	12.9%
8	H5	very severe slope	11.5%
9	M1	plateau	2.3%
10	M2	plateau/gentle slope	1.5%
11	M3	moderate slope	2.7%
12	M4	very severe slope	5.2%

Table 1. *Percentage of the different physiographical classes present in the Levadeia area (P=plain; H=hill; M=mountain).*

RESOURCES

The basin of Thespieae, along with other small basins in the area, is covered with a brown, thick and muddy soil, which can be considered one of the most fertile soils of Greece, and is cultivated to a great extent. Generally speaking, the Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes of which most of the area is constituted (see above) is a formation marked by fertile soil (see in fig.8 the F areas). Some marshy areas are present, and some areas are apparently not characterised by the presence of surface streams, but water sources are not rare, and the villages of the area (Ellopia, Vagia, Neochori, Erimokastro/Thespies, etc.) still take their water from them (Philippson 1951: 502). The Livadostra river valley also constitutes a fertile area, to the SE, with fluvial deposits. On the other hand, the ridge that separates the Thespieae basin from the Livadostra valley constituted of dolomites and carbonate rocks, as well as the carbonate Helicon massif overlooking the area from the NW, do not allow agricultural production but create a landscape suitable for grazing (Shiel-Stewart 2007). Hunting activities are also attested on Mt.Helicon (IG VII 1828, quoted in Fossey 1988: 165).

A detailed study of the soil potential of the immediate surroundings of the city of Thespieae has been carried out by Shiel and Stewart (2007) and offers guidelines for understanding the agricultural landscape of the region (see table 2 in chapter I.2.1).

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

1	THESPIAE	Components TH_1 to TH_12
2	Thespieae NE	Component TH_6
3	Erimokastro W	Component TH_13
4	Thespieae vicinity	Component TH_15
5	Thespieae S	Components TH_17 to TH_19
6	Thespieae E (poliandrion)	Component TH_14
7	Palaiokarandas	Components TH_29 to TH_32
8	Leondari NE	Component TH_20
9	Vagia	Components TH_21 and TH_22
10	Mavromati	Components TH_26 to TH_28
11	Askra Episkopi (ancient ASKRA)	Components TH_33 to TH_39
12	Askra Pyrgaki	Components TH_40 to TH_44
13	Askra - Sanctuary of the Muses	Components TH_45 to TH_49 and TH_23
14	Askra Helicon	Custers TH_50 and TH_51
15	Askra Hippokrene	Component TH_52
16/17	Neochorion	Components TH_96 (16) and TH_97 (17)
18	Ellopia – Koraki	Component TH_94
19	Ellopia – Agia Kyriaki	Component TH_95
20 – 23	Tatiza	Components TH_53 (20), TH_54 (21), TH_55 to TH_57 (22), TH_58 (23)
24	Xironomi	Components TH_59 and TH_60
25	Livadostro E – Kastro	Components TH_61 to TH_69 and TH_24
26	Livadostro W	Components TH_70 to TH_74
27 – 30	Parapoungia/Leuktra	Components TH_75 (27), TH_76 (28), TH_77 (29) and TH_25 (30)
31/32/33	Arkopodi – Eutresis	Components TH_78 to TH_86, TH_84 and TH_89 (31); TH_87, TH_88 TH_90 to TH_92 (32); TH_93 (33)

Table 2. *List of archaeological components and activity loci mapped in fig.2.*

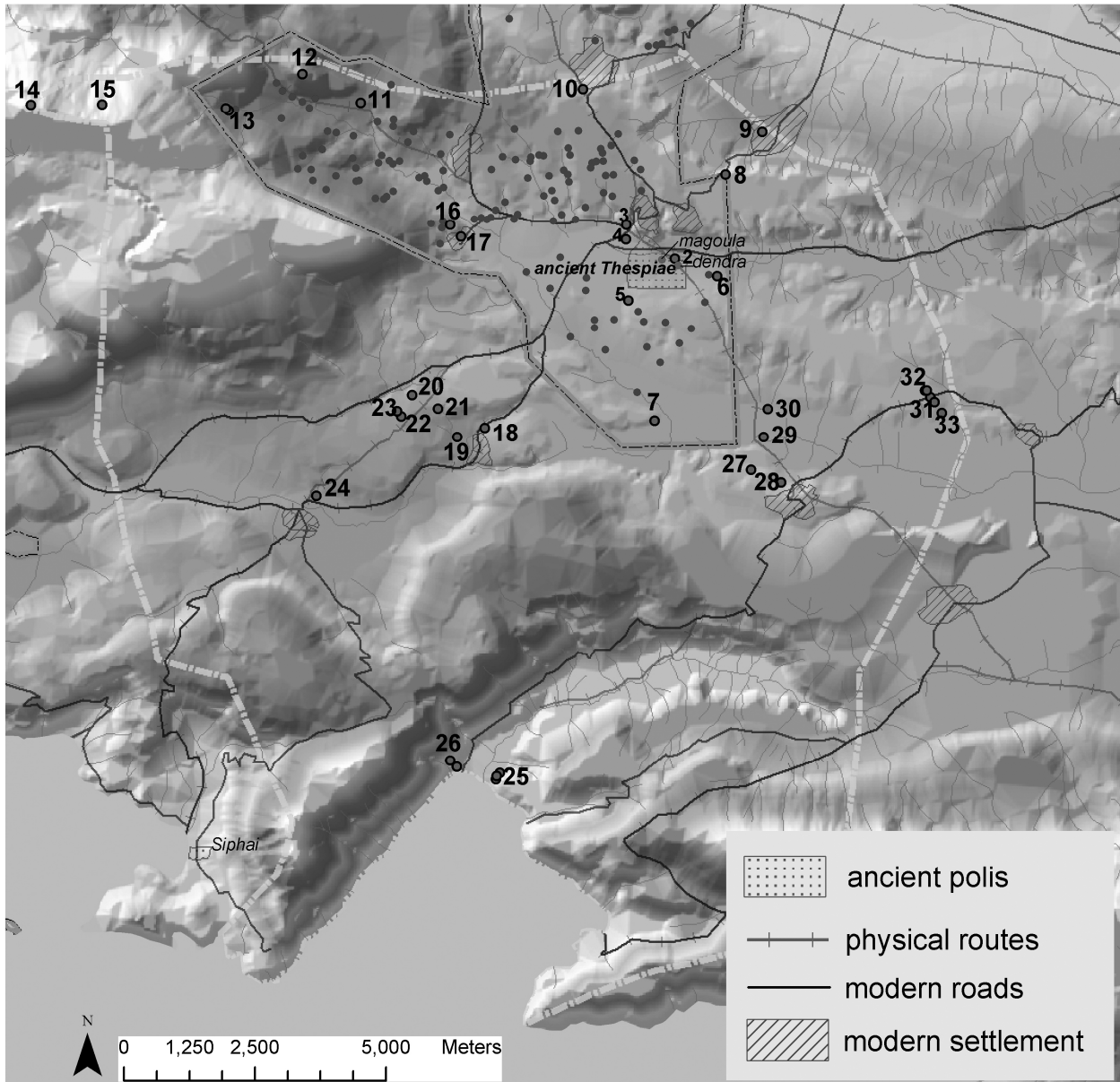


Fig.2. Archaeological map of Thespieae chora.

In the general picture of archaeological discoveries in the *chora* of ancient Thespieae, rescue excavations are little represented, probably because of the inner position of the area compared to the main Boeotian roads and urban centre.

Conversely, intensive and systematic artefact surface surveys carried out in several areas of the *chora* (in particular in the immediate surroundings of the city site and further to the N, as well as in the Valley of the Muses – see map in fig.3), covered different types of landscapes within the micro-region and give us a more reliable picture of the diachronic occupation of the landscape (see below and chapter III.2).

Discoveries led by personal or group interest are greatly represented, and this is due largely to interest in the main outstanding sites within the *chora*, such as the sanctuary of the Muses and the Hellenistic fortification in the Valley of the Muses, or the evidence at Livadostro/Kreusis and Eutresis. Accidental discoveries

are also quite significantly represented, and correspond mainly to cemetery and burial areas discovered by means of inscriptional evidence.

A Systematic Intensive Surface Survey carried out in the area around Thespieae (area surveyed mapped in fig.2) in the 1980s by J.L. Bintliff A.M.Snodgrass and their team discovered sites listed in appendix I.9 (table SURVEY SITES) and mapped in fig.3.

In the graph (fig.4) the segment ‘intensive and systematic artefact surface survey’ refers only to components representing periods of occupation discovered only by means of intensive survey at sites whose occupation in other periods was known already by extensive surveys or other kind of research. It does not refer therefore to the large numbers of activity foci reported in appendix I.9 (table SURVEY SITES). If we add these components to the general picture, the chart would change considerably (fig.5).

II.3.9 THESPIKE

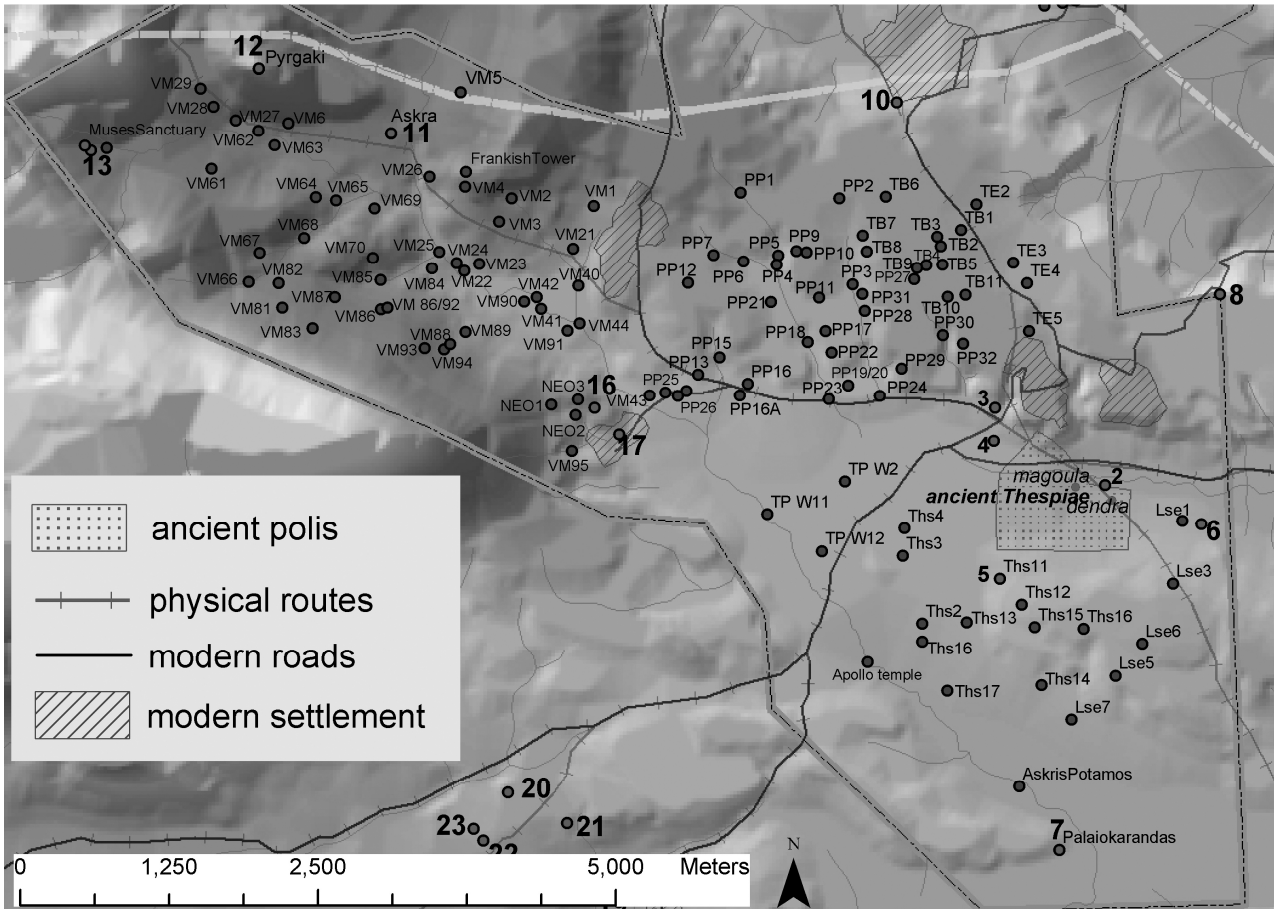


Fig.3. Same as fig.2, but limited to the area intensively surveyed, with discovered sites (listed in appendix I.9 - table SURVEY SITES) marked.

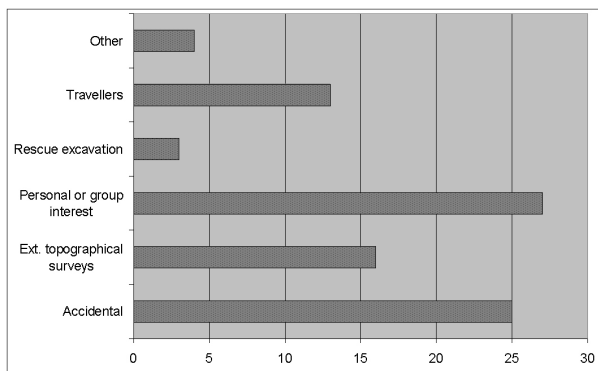


Fig.4. Graph illustrating the proportion of components discovered within different research frameworks.

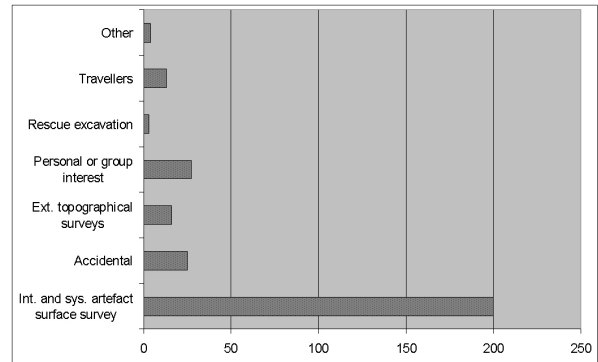


Fig.5. Graph illustrating the proportion of components discovered within different research frameworks, including Intensive and Systematic Artefact Surface Survey.

In fig.6 we can see the relationship between known archaeological sites and the distance from the modern road network. With the exception of the sites in the upper valley of the Muses and the prominent Palaiokarandas ridge, quite far from the main roads, the correspondence is quite striking. This is mainly due to research focused on the main settlements, which were along main routes that also correspond to the modern road network. The map with the results of the intensive surface surveys carried out in the area helps us to understand to what extent the archaeological record deduced from bibliographical sources mainly on extensive research could be incomplete.

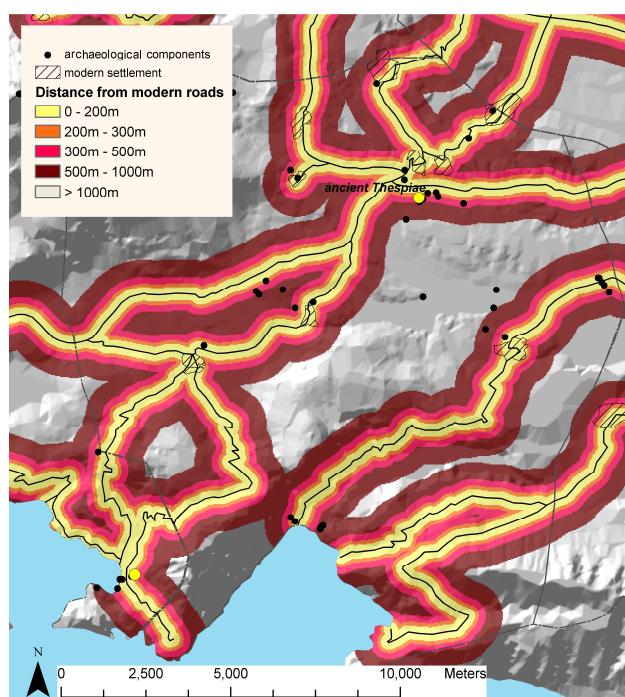


Fig.6. Relationship between components and modern road network.

The ratio of known Prehistoric to Greco-Roman components is 18 to 79 (1:4.4), while among the historical periods, 66% are dated Archaic to Hellenistic, 27% Roman-Late Roman, and 7% are attributed to the general Greco-Roman period. The Prehistoric landscape is comparatively quite poorly known, and this is probably mainly due to biases in research (generally less interest in the area shown by Prehistorians), as intensive survey work conducted in parts of the area demonstrates, with a considerable number of Prehistoric sites discovered. The ratio between historical periods shows the general picture known elsewhere in other *chorai* of Boeotia and from intensive surface surveys for the rural landscape.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHORA LANDSCAPE

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

The Prehistoric landscape is quite well represented in the Thespieae *chora*, though mainly from sites which also show later occupation.

The Neolithic landscape picture is highlighted by the important sites at Thespieae Magoula (*component TH_9*) and the occupation at Arkopodi-Eutresis (*component TH_78*). EH occupation is known at Thespieae Magoula (*component TH_10*) and at the Livadostro East site (*component TH_61*), as well as at the Prehistoric settlement of Arkopodi-Eutresis (*component TH_79*). Signs of probable occupation are attested at the historical period site of the Sanctuary of the Muses (*component TH_49*), while traces of an EH activity focus have been found by Tatiza (*component TH_53*) – see figs.6-7 in chapter II.3.1.

For the MH period, the most important site known in the area is the settlement at Arkopodi-Eutresis (*component TH_80*). MH occupation is attested also at the Thespieae Magoula site (*component TH_11*), as well as at the Livadostro East site (*component TH_62*) along with possible MH tombs (*component TH_64*) – see fig.8 in chapter II.3.1.

The LH period, with a probable presence at the Thespieae Magoula site (*component TH_12*), and presence of uncertain character at Askra Pyrgaki (*component TH_40*), is mainly represented by the burial place W of the modern village of Erimokastro/Thespies (chamber tomb – *component TH_13*), and the rich Mycenaean tombs by Tatiza (*component TH_54*), as well as by the fortified settlement site at Arkopodi-Eutresis (*component TH_81*), and the elevated site at the E end of the Livadostro bay (*component TH_63*). The prehistoric occupation at the E end of the Livadostro bay, in an elevated and strategic position, attests a use of the coastal location in the prehistoric period, which corresponds with the prehistoric presence in other Boeotian bays to the gulf of Corinth (see chapter II.3.10) – see fig.9 in chapter II.3.1.

Prehistoric human presence is also attested at the Dendra locality, by the Thespieae city site (*component TH_16*), and elsewhere in the *chora* as shown by the intensive survey work carried out in the area (see appendix I.9 - table SURVEY SITES). In fact, intensive survey work in the area slightly increases our knowledge of the Prehistoric human landscape in the area, with the discovery of small rural sites in the plain.

GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY⁶

Town level

The city of Thespieae (*components TH_1 to TH_8*) was situated at the formation of the Kanavaris river, at the crossroad of the routes Thebes-Thisvi (-Gulf of Corinth)⁷, Koroneia-Plataia (-Athens), Haliartos-Kreusis, and in the centre of a very fertile area. Thespieae was a quite large city, which on many occasions was a strong adversary of Thebes. Developed in the Geometric and Archaic periods, in high Classical times the city of Thespieae reached an estimated area of ca. 100ha, as attested by the intensive

⁶ Period maps are included in chapter II.4, figs.17-19-21-23-25-27.

⁷ Following the Kanavaris valley until Thespieae and then crossing Thespieae plain.

and systematic artefact surface survey carried out on both the urban area and the immediate surroundings (Bintliff 1994a; Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007). During Late Hellenistic to mid-Roman times (ca 200 BC – 400 AD) the city shrank, though in the *chora* there were localised districts little affected by the general trend, in accordance with Strabo's statement (IX 2.25) that Tanagra and Thespieae stood out as relatively prosperous in his time in comparison with the rest of Boeotia⁸. In the Late Roman period the territory of Thespieae revived in both town and country (see below – RURAL SEGMENT), although its re-expansion seemed to extend only to its confined Early Roman size and never begins to approach its Classical maximum (as it happens, for instance, in its satellite settlement of Askra - see below and appendix I.9; Bintliff 1996b).

Thespieae had access to the sea through the Livadostro valley, at the end of which was the harbour of the city, identified as ancient *Kreusis* (see *components TH_70 to TH_74*).

Village level

Askra (*components TH_33 to TH_39*) is definitely one of the second-rank settlements present in the Thespieae *chora*, a *proto-polis*, exploiting a well-defined settlement chamber, which would have become a *polis* if it were not for the presence of stronger Thespieae. Hesiod's account seems to indicate that by the close of the Geometric era Askra was already a dependent village of the *polis* of Thespieae with its corrupt nobles or *basileis*⁹. Furthermore, a village settlement site could be at Arkopodi-Eutresis, if the evidence indeed supports such an identification (see *components TH_85* and below – LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS). A settlement was probably associated to the harbour at Livadostro. Other second-rank settlements can be hypothesised in the area of Xironomi and Ellopia and to the N of Thespieae (see below - LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS).

Rural segment

From the picture given to us by extensive surveys and excavation data only, the rural segment is certainly under-represented. With the exception of the Late Roman rural site at Tatiza (*component TH_58*), and the large wealthy Hellenistic-Roman rural site at Arkopodi-Eutresis (discovered due to the presence of occupation of other periods), only burial sites might allow the localisation of some rural sites (see below - *burial areas*). On the other hand, if we add to the picture the sites discovered through intensive survey, we can note in the Classical-Hellenistic period the filling in of the landscape with rural

settlement, especially of medium-sized farms and hamlets rather than small farms (hamlets are known in the area through intensive survey work carried out by the Boeotia project – LS3, LS6 and Askris potamos sites – fig.3 and fig.15 in chapter II.4). A densely scattered landscape was recorded especially N of the city of Thespieae, and in the valley of the Muses, while on the uplands N of the Thespieae plain, the survey did not record any signs of ancient hamlets and only scanty evidence of rural sites. Thus, imbalances are observed in the frequency of rural habitation in different parts of the *chora*, with high density of rural settlement in the inner zone of rural and urban nucleations (Thespieae city and Askra), and with lower rural densities in the outer zone of the *chora*, to the N and NW (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 146-148).

The sites of the Late Hellenistic / Early Roman period, show a retraction of settlement intensity, in accordance with the major decline in overall activity in the *chora*. In the Mid to Late Roman period, the landscape undergoes a radical transformation with the appearance of villa complexes associated with hamlets of dependent labour. The peak is observed in Late Roman times, when the total surface area of rural settlement is twice the Classical-Hellenistic component, redirected into a new pattern of land use, associated with valley soils and marketable and transportable crops as a major product (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 154-158).

Burial areas

In addition to the monumental Classical *poliandrion* (Thespieae E – *component TH_14*), by the city there are cemeteries linked to the city site: *components TH_17, TH_18* and *TH_19*, *component TH_15*, and probably also *component TH_6*. Furthermore, the multi-period (Classical to Roman) burial place at Palaiokarandas (*components TH_30 to TH_32*), with a probable Hellenistic shrine associated, should be linked to the city site.

Burial sites might suggest the presence of small villages or rural sites nearby, such as *component TH_20*, *components TH_21* and *TH_22*, probable *components TH_26 to TH_28*, *component TH_94* (and *TH_95*), *components TH_55 to TH_57* (Tatiza).

Cult places/Religious areas

The sacred landscape of the region is certainly marked by the religious character assigned to Mt.Helicon, with the presence of the well-known Archaic to Roman Sanctuary of the Muses (*components TH_45 to TH_48*). Still on Helicon, at the Askra Hippokrene site, a cult-use of the spring has been suggested (*component TH_52*).

Cult places are known at Arkopodi-Eutresis (Archaic-Classical cult place, which could be linked to the settlement – see *components TH_82 to TH_84*), as well as in connection with burials (the Classical *poliandrion* – *component TH_14*, *component TH_29* as well as *component TH_6*).

Forts and fortifications

The landscape of the area is marked by the Geometric to Hellenistic fort at Askra Pyrgaki (*components TH_41 to TH_44*), overlooking the valley of the Muses and the N-S

⁸ See the results of the survey conducted by the Boeotia Project in a district S of Thespieae city (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007).

⁹ Hesiodus *Op.* 38f., 248f. and 639. See also Strabo IX 2.25 for Askra being part of the Thespieae *chora* in the Roman period. The intensive and systematic artefact surface survey carried out at the site showed how by high Classical times Askra can be seen to have expanded to its maximum size of 11ha. In Late-Hellenistic to Mid-Roman times the settlement of Askra, along with Thespieae, shrank, to recover its full Classical extent in Late Roman times (Bintliff 1996b).

passages. It was part of the network of fortifications of the 4th C controlled by Thebes, but was already in use earlier. Another probable Archaic-Classical watch-tower is known on Helicon (*components TH_50 and TH_51*).

In the Late Roman period, there was a fortified settlement at the city of Thespieae, as well as probably in the Livadostro bay.

Other activities / unspecified activity areas

Harbour activities are known at Livadostro, identified as ancient Kreusis, the port of Thespieae in Greco-Roman times (Paus IX 32.1)¹⁰.

LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS IN THE CHORA LANDSCAPE

Central to the whole area is the large central basin of Thespieae. In antiquity this basin was under the immediate control of the city of Thespieae, while today this region is divided into large village territories, centred on fairly regularly spaced settlements mainly located at the edge of the Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes. This pattern goes back to the Ottoman and medieval periods (see Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 166-167 for the hamlets of Erimokastro, Palaeoneochori and Askra VM4 site). As Bintliff et al note: “*this dominance of nucleated community life may have begun in late antiquity, with the joint foci of the towns (such as Thespieae and Askra) and the large hamlet estates of the Later Roman countryside*” (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 179).

The modern villages of Thespies (formerly Erimokastro, registered in the 17th century lists) and Leondari (formerly Kaskaveli, registered in the Ottoman defters 1466-1570) on the edge of the Tertiary *tafel*, before the site of the ancient *polis* of Thespieae, control the central part of the basin, replacing the plain Greek village of Erimokastro, which occupied the plain in the medieval period in the location of the ancient city.

To the W, Neochori, at the foot of the Helicon spur jutting to the E in line with the location of the ancient city, occupies the western plain. It was a Byzantine and Frankish era community continuing in the Ottoman (registered in 1506-1570) and modern period, moving downhill to the present village location. The ancient occupation of this settlement chamber is attested by the important Prehistoric site (survey site Neo1) and signs of Greco-Roman occupation (see survey site Neo 2 and 3; and PP25 and PP26 in table SURVEY SITES in appendix I.9).

To the NW of the central basin of Thespieae, the so-called Valley of the Muses can be considered a small self-contained landscape within the wider area, opening into the Helicon massif in a SE-NW direction. It belongs today to the modern village of Askri (formerly Panagia).

To its W the Frankish and Ottoman site of Paleopanagia (VM4 - recorded as a Greek village in 1466-1646) indicates continuity of population from the ancient town of Askra (*components TH_33 to TH_39*) to the Frankish tower location and finally to the present village which moved to its new position in the 17th century (modern Askri)¹¹.

N of Thespieae plain, on the foothills S of the Teneric plain, are situated the modern villages of Mavromati (registered 1466-1570) and Vagia (recorded 1506-1642 and in the 17th century lists), exploiting both the hilly country that belonged in antiquity to the territory of Thespieae, and the plains further N that belonged to the territory of ancient Haliartos and Thebes. The Boeotia survey did not record any signs of ancient hamlets in this hilly landscape, and even the evidence for small and medium rural sites is thin, in contrast to the densely scattered landscape N of the city of Thespieae and the valley of the Muses (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 146).

To the S, the Livadostro valley today forms a distinct settlement chamber with the village of Leuktra in the inland (formerly Parapungia, registered in the Ottoman defters from 1466 to 1646) as a diachronic *focus* of settlement (the prehistoric site of Eutresis is nearby, also a *focus* of Byzantine and Frankish settlement). Here lies a possible settlement gap in antiquity, which can only partially be filled in by archaeological evidence (see above and Bintliff 1994b: fig.20). By the coast, Livadostro, the harbour site of modern Leuktra, appears as an active harbour in the 1540 register but without permanent population, as probable continuation from the Frankish site at this location (Bintliff-Kiel in preparation). In antiquity this potential settlement chamber, through which Thespieae had access to the sea, had been controlled by the city, through its harbour at Livadostro, identified as ancient *Kreusis*.

To the S of the ancient city of Thespieae also opens up the settlement chamber of the modern villages of Xironomi and Ellopia. The territory of Xironomi today contains part of the inland country and extends to the Gulf of Corinth, to the harbour site of Aliki (which formed a separate small *polis* in antiquity - see chapter II.3.10). In the Ottoman period the Albanian village Tatiza¹² (registered in 1466-1646, with possible remains of a Frankish tower also) occupied the settlement chamber just N of Xironomi, a small alluvial plain on the route from Thespies to Xironomi and Thisvi. Modern Ellopia occupies a separate settlement chamber in the interior, which forms part of the Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes.

In the Thespieae region we face the problem of the mid-land areas behind Thebes (on and to the S of the Tertiary *tafel* – the Thespike and Plataea-Parasopia area) where no physical constraints define settlement chambers and the settlements create culturally imposed divisions of the land. The settlement chambers examined above, which

¹⁰ The Admiralty Handbook describes the port as too exposed. A coastal change would probably explain its use in antiquity. Heurtley locates at Livadostro (Kreusis) an important S-coast port in the Mycenaean period, as he locates remains of a road in use in the Mycenaean period on the W slope of the Livadostro valley (Heurtley 1923/25).

¹¹ See Bintliff's article on the settlement history in the valley from antiquity to the present (Bintliff 1996b).

¹² House walls and the church of Agia Triada are the visible remains of the deserted village.

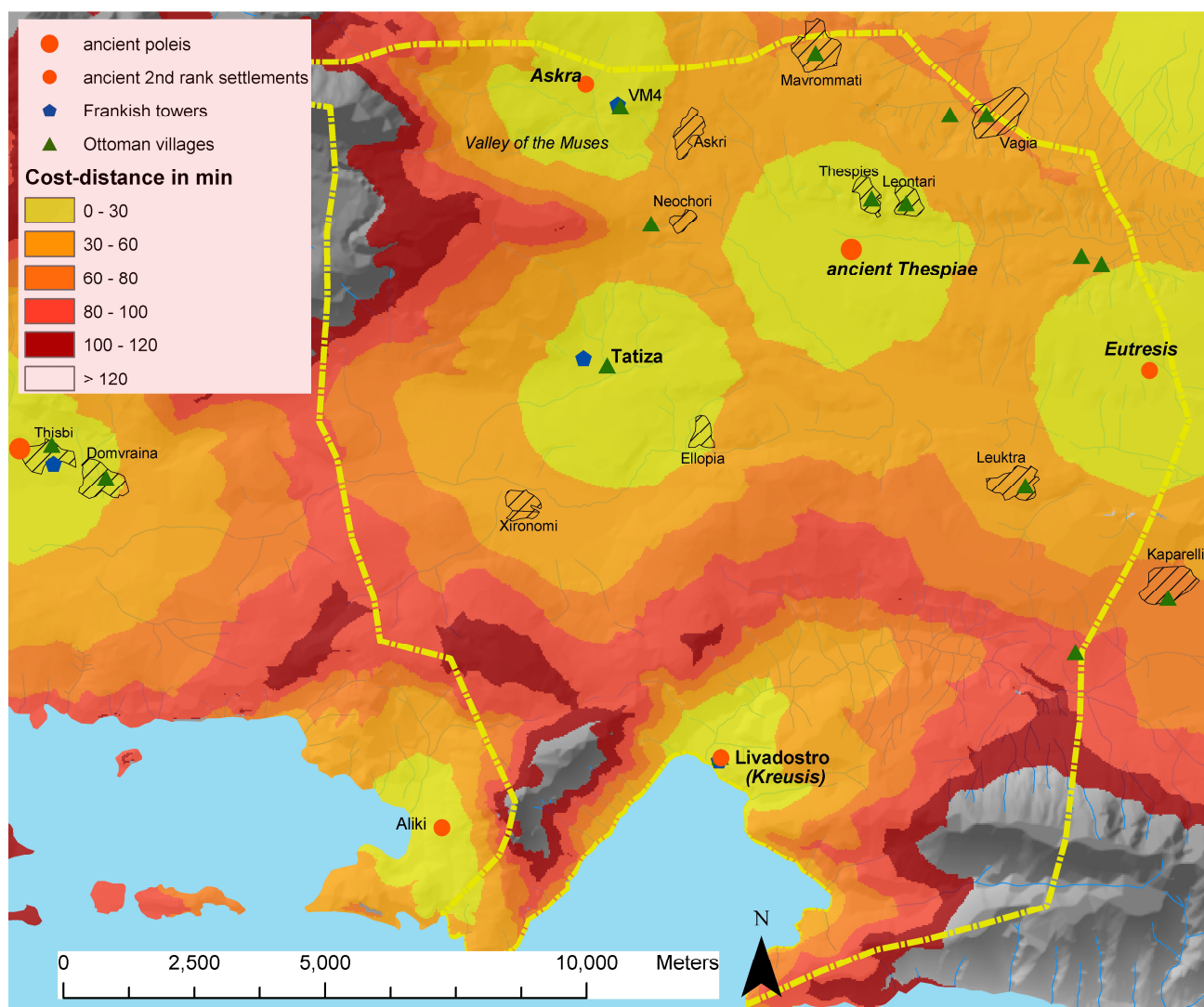


Fig. 7. Classified surface representing the cost-weighted distance (1/2 h walking and further ranges) from recognised 1st and 2nd rank ancient settlements (represented by larger and smaller dots). Areas without dots indicate potential settlement chambers. Ottoman villages and Frankish towers have also been added to the map to show their spatial relationship with the Greco-Roman settlement network and to appreciate potential settlement chambers.

are occupied by modern villages which to a large extent go back to the medieval and Ottoman period, indicate possible niches for ancient settlement and can be helpful in the analysis, representing possible locations of second-order settlements in the Greco-Roman period. For example, from the aforementioned modern and pre-modern settlement chambers, evidence for habitation exists for the Thespies/Leondari area with the ancient main *polis* of Thespieae, for the valley of the Muses, with the ancient *kome* of Askra, and for the area of Xironomi and Ellopia¹³. In those cases, the archaeological evidence

¹³ In the area of Tatiza, by modern Ellopia, a small village is hypothesised (AD21 1966: 202), according to surface archaeological evidence and excavated burials (Spyropoulos AD 1971: 221) – components TH_53 to TH_57 (for the Classical period, see also components TH_94 and TH_95). Also by Xironomi, burial evidence could testify to the presence of a small community in the nearby area (see components TH_59 and TH_60). In the absence of a more detailed archaeological record, we can consider the more recent

of uncertain attribution can be supported by a cost-distance analysis¹⁴ based on ancient settlement which shows enough room for one or two small settlements there (fig.7). Nucleated habitation can only be guessed for the area of Eutresis (see above) and Livadostro. As for the latter, a small scale settlement was probably associated with harbour and fort, as there was probably enough cultivable land to support it (fig.8). Apart from the small alluvial plain by the coast, today the landscape

settlement pattern. The fact that today the area support two villages could be some support for the hypothesis of two small settlements, but the apparent absence of more than one Ottoman village in the area might also lead to the interpretation of the available archaeological evidence as corresponding to a village settlement in the area of Ottoman Tatize (much closer to Ellopia but in fact the predecessor of Xironomi in controlling the wider area down to the sea at Aiki) and some sort of hamlet by Xironomi (see also chapter II.3.10). The presence of one village in this area has already been suggested by Bintliff (1994b fig.20).

¹⁴ See chapter II.3.1 – LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS.

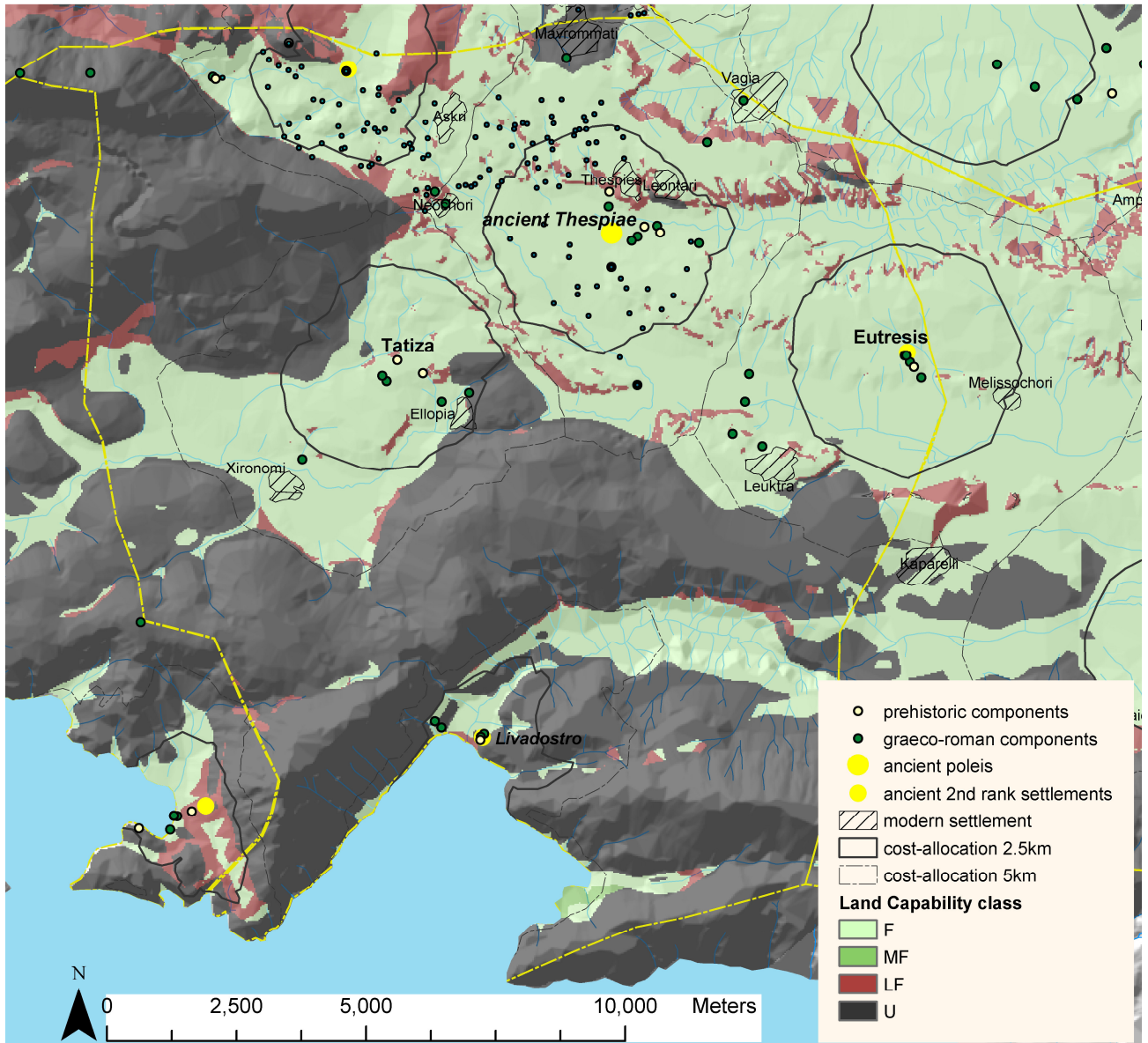


Fig.8. Map showing the Greco-Roman settlement network, the polygons resulting from the cost-distance analysis (marking half an hour and one hour walking time distance) and dots representing the known archaeological components (same as in fig.2), with land capability information underlain.

is marked by much hilly olive land on the lower slopes of the gorge, in stretches for several kilometers, though one should ask whether the cultivation is due to motor access for farmers, as it is so remote and previously was hard to access. As for Eutresis, the settlement nucleation gravitates onto the wider area of the modern village of Leuktra (the two locations are within a one hour walk of each other), where a settlement would have been in antiquity. The cost-distance analysis (fig.7) would also confirm the space for a village slot in the area, as already suggested by Bintliff (1994b fig.20) in considering the fact, also, that Thespieae and Eutresis lie in similar locations, on fertile uplands and near water sources. Eutresis fits the Plataea-Thespieae village gap, and dominates fertile land in all directions. The area was also crossed by the route from Thebes to the port of Livadostro, which was not direct but ran through the area of the modern village of Parapungia/Leuktra, where it

was joint to the road from Orchomenos to Tespies (Philippson 1951: 505).

For other present-day occupied settlement chambers there seems to be scant evidence of antiquity. A characteristic example is offered by the settlement chambers of modern Mavrommati and Vagia, where, as mentioned above, there is slim evidence from the Boeotia survey for rural settlement in this area, also partially probably belonging to Haliartos (see chapter II.3.8).

Two places mentioned in ancient texts and probably in Thespieae *chora* remain unidentified: Ellopia (Stephanus Byzantius s.v. *Ellopia*) and Leontarne ("below Helicon" on Schol. Venet. B on *Ilias* II 507), for which a location at Tatiza has been suggested (A.Snodgrass, pers.comm.).

Moving from nucleations to the rural level, our evidence from excavation data is accidental, and it is information from systematic surveys which sheds light on the picture

(fig.3). In the sector of the Thespieae *chora* surveyed, for the Classical-Hellenistic period, the Boeotia survey project's team noted imbalances in frequency of small rural sites, hamlets and farms in different parts of the *chora* (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 150-51). The inner northern zone, together with the valley of the Muses, produced evidence for high density of rural settlement, with a predominance of medium-sized farms and hamlets rather than small farms. According to Bintliff et al. "they must be either hamlets composed of several farming families, or the centres of wealthy estates" related to the issue of oligarchic class in the countryside (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 134-35, 150). Some of these certainly mark hamlets or small villages (as the Askris Potamos site). Yet, despite the presence of these sites, most of the landscape in the THS/LSE sector was farmed by citizens resident in the city, leaving a small sector to be farmed from the rural sites. Conversely, the outer zone to the N and NW shows very low densities, noted also in the immediate countryside of the *chora* of Haliartos and Hyettos, marking regional differences in the urban-rural population in different parts of Boeotia (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 146).

This exaggerated density of Classical Hellenistic sites, which begins about 1km N of the city of Thespieae, runs also across in the Valley of the Muses. In the Valley of the Muses, apart from the settlement of Askra¹⁵, there is a dense scatter of small and medium Classical-Hellenistic sites, but also some quite large hamlet size sites (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 146, 148). This evidence indicates an enhancement of the rural population in the close vicinity of rural and urban nucleations, e.g. the city of Thespieae and Askra, with lower rural densities in outer segments of the *chora*, which were occupied in later periods (see discussion above for the medieval and post-medieval settlement pattern).

In the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman period a decline of settlement occurs in the eastern and southeastern hinterland with a reduction in the number of hamlets and farms. Also Askra may have been abandoned in Late Hellenistic – Early Roman times. Whatever was the reason (either an overall declining population and economy, or the swallowing up of small properties into larger estates), the sites of the Late Hellenistic to Early Roman transition "show clearly a retraction of settlement intensity, rather than a loss of variety of niches exploited" (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 151-5). On the other hand, the SW hinterland sees an expansion of rural occupation, which marks a putative beginning of a new farming regime that would become fully visible in Mid and Late Roman times. By mature Roman times there are clear signs of revival of rural settlement, along with a new emphasis in land use. Villa complexes appear in association with hamlets of dependent labour. "By Late Roman times, the total surface area of rural settlement [...] is twice the Classical-Hellenistic complement. Although the later Roman city appears only marginally larger than in Early Roman times [...], activity in

selected parts of the chora has vastly increased" (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 157). Instead of a variety of catchment types typical of the Classical period, we have the dominance of a single type of environmental niche (the most fertile and moist valley colluvial-alluvial soil). Extensive estates around large rural sites can be reconstructed, meant to produce the entire range of crops and animal products to which the different parts of the landscape were suited, along with a more market-orientated economy for the wealthy land-owning class (Bintliff-Howard-Snodgrass 2007: 158).

¹⁵ Which according to the calculations of J.L.Bintliff housed a population of 1,250 people within an area of 11ha of Classical occupation (Bintliff 1996b).

