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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.3.13

The Boeotian coastal area facing the Euboean sea N of Chalkis: Anthedonia and Skroponeri bay

TOPOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Geographically speaking, the Boeotian coastal area facing the Euboean sea N of Chalkis (the N Euboean Strait), including the Anthedon area proper and the Skroponeri bay (see also Fossey 1988: 251) can be seen as a whole. On the other hand, the two areas strictly speaking constitute two small topographic units and, if we are interested in the area under the control of a specific *polis*, then the *polis* of Anthedon probably did not always have direct control over the Skroponeri bay, though the bay, which seems to be the most isolated corner of ancient Boeotia, is reachable from Anthedon through a coastal pass¹.

Therefore, when examining and describing some aspects, for instance the resources available to the *chora* of Anthedon, we will consider the areas as separated.

With regards to the Paralimni area, only the NE half of

the lake is included in this *chora*, since it was probably under the control of Anthedon (or at least gravitating towards the area of Anthedon). The rest of the Paralimni and Yliki lake areas are included in the *chora* of Thebes. Therefore, the settlement history in the area of the lakes will be discussed in chapter II.3.12 - THE SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA OF THE LAKES.

Anthedon's territory is naturally defined by the sea and the mountains behind. The proper *Anthedonia* (Strabo IX 2.13) is, as Fossey describes it (1988: 251), a long, even, level coastal plain sloping gently between the Northern mountains (Ktipas and its foothills to the SE and S, Ptoion to the W) and the North Euboean Strait.

Between Ktipas and Ptoion, the low ridge of Rachi connects the coastal plain to the Paralimni lake (Fossey 1988: 251). The land which separates the Paralimni lake from the 2 km distant coast is at an elevation of 87m

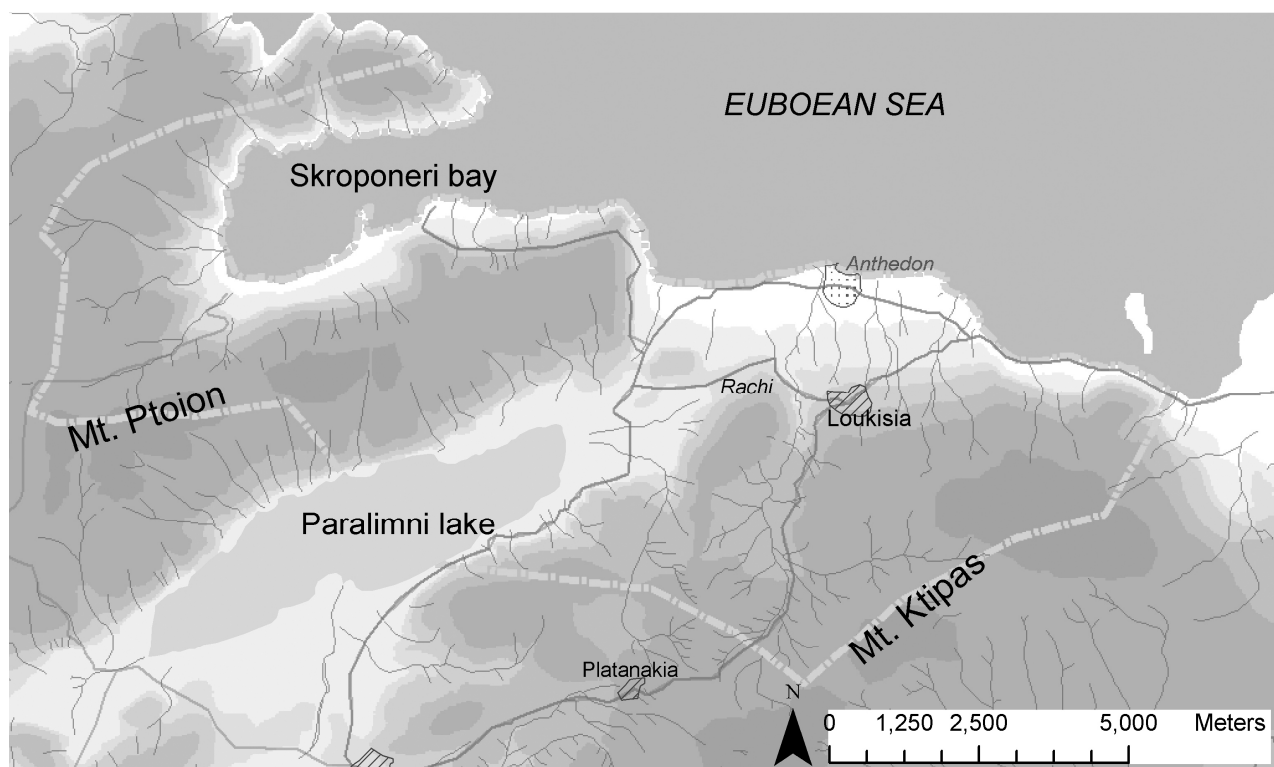


Fig.1. Topographical setting of the region.

¹ For a similar case of a wider geographical unit divided into smaller geographical and political units, see the Gulf of Corinth area.

(Philippon 1951: 496), while the shore is comprised of a long straight sandy beach. A tunnel discharges water from the lake into the sea when the lake's water level is high.

Boundaries

The borders of the region are marked in Fossey's map (1988: 250 fig. 31). The border of the *chora* probably passed through the middle of Paralimni lake. Mountain barriers are the Ktipas to the SE, and to the NW the mountainous peninsula which closes the Skroponeri bay to the N. Between the Skroponeri bay and the coastal plain of Anthedon is the NE spur of the Ptoion ridge, which closes the Anthedon area proper to the NW.

PHYSICAL LAND UNITS

All classes of physiographical position are present in the fairly small area, creating a landscape of variegated forms.

The mountainous segment is represented mainly by the highest peaks of Ptoion and Ktipas belonging to the area (see map in fig.1). Very few hillslope plateau features (H1) are present, and no mountain plateaus (M1). The landscape is mainly comprised of plain areas/valleys, foothills and some plateaus along the W slopes of the Ktipas ridge in the Anthedon area proper, while steep slopes mark the landscape of the Skroponeri bay (see fig.2 in chapter II.1).

<i>Hilly landscape</i>	48%
<i>Mountainous landscape</i>	7%
<i>Plain</i>	45%

1	P1_P2	lacustrine basin, valley	15.7%
2	P3	gentle slope	4.5%
3	P4	foothill	24.8%
4	H1	plateau	9.7%
5	H2	gentle slope	0.3%
6	H3	moderate slope	3.9%
7	H4	severe slope	9.5%
8	H5	very severe slope	24.5%
9	M1	plateau	1.1%
10	M2	plateau/gentle slope	0.92%
11	M3	moderate slope	2.3%
12	M4	very severe slope	2.8%

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

RESOURCES

Anthedon was mainly a maritime city with little agricultural land, and the inhabitants lived from fishing, purple and murex, and boat-building (Philippon 1951: 496).

The plain of Anthedon is very fertile, being the result of alluvial deposits of the streams descending mainly from the Ktipas ridge (see fig.6). A good swathe of excellent Neogen land is available behind the site up to and beyond the modern village of Loukisia.

Heraclides (I 23-4) speaks about the economy of ancient Anthedon (based mainly on fishing and viticulture). For fishing (the fish of Anthedon were very well known in antiquity), see Athenaeus *Deipn.* VII 316 a. For viticulture, we know from Plutarch (*Quaest.Gr.* 19) that it had declined in Roman times (ancient sources reported by Fossey 1988: 263)². In the Late Roman period, the activities of the inhabitants probably became more and more focused on the harbour.

As noted by Fossey (1988: 251), and still today, mainly cereals, vegetables and fine citrus groves, as well as cotton fields, are in the area, with vineyards and grazing land on Mt.Ktipas, much as it probably was in antiquity also. Little fishing is done.

Just before Loukisia (following the road from Platanakia), one can note well-cultivated terraces on the talus and Tertiary formations immediately beyond the plain (included in class F=1 in the map in fig.6).

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

1	ANTHEDON Mandraki – Kastro	<i>Components AN_1 to AN_11</i>
2	Anthedon Mandraki W	<i>Component AN_13</i>
3	Anthedon Mandraki SE	<i>Component AN_12</i>
4	Anthedon Paliambela	<i>Component AN_40</i>
5	Tourlo	<i>Components AN_14 to AN_16 and AN_39</i>
6	Skroponeri Peninsula	<i>Components AN_17 to AN_23</i>
7	Skroponeri Kastro	<i>Components AN_24 to AN_25</i>

Table 2. *List of archaeological components and activity loci mapped in fig.2 – Anthedon and Skroponeri area.*

PARALIMNI AREA

Communication along the Paralimni lake was not easy. It is a lake of tectonic formation, and therefore with bordering slopes that are steep and rocky (see chapter II.1). There are openings only at the two ends, with very fertile zones formed by lacustrine deposits. The NE end can be interpreted as belonging to the area controlled by the *polis* of Anthedon (and this becomes valid especially when considering the difficulties in land communication between the two ends of the lake). On the other hand, the SW end has been included in the Thebais *chora* (chapter II.3.12), since it is much more easily approachable from there (and it was probably under the direct control of Thebes in the Greco-Roman period).

8	Paralimni Pyrgos	<i>Components AN_26 to AN_35</i>
9	Paralimni Pyrgos E	<i>Component AN_38</i>
10	Paralimni Pyrgos NE	<i>Components AN_36 and AN_37</i>

Table 3. *List of archaeological components and activity loci mapped in fig.2 – Paralimni area.*

² A decline in Roman times can be noted for Haliartos also, and in the case of Haliartos it is certainly due to a specific historical fact (the destruction of the city by the Romans in 171 BC).

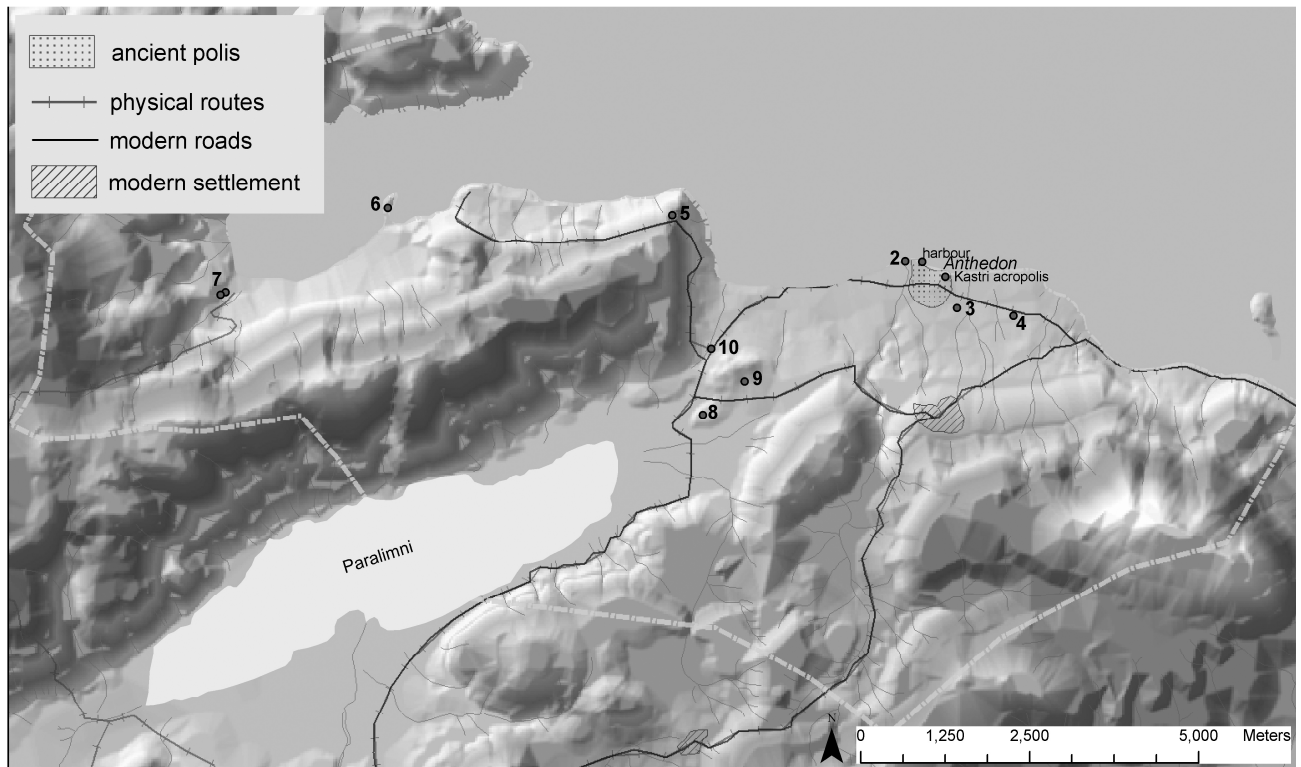


Fig.2. Archaeological map of Anthedon chora.

The only site known in the Anthedon area proper is, in fact, Anthedon itself, with its harbour, with the exception of a periurban sanctuary site and some Neolithic occupation by the city site. Other known sites from the wider area are at the Parolimni N edge, and further away in the Skroponeri bay, and a site along the coastal road that links Anthedon to Skroponeri (Tourlo) – see appendix I.13.

The fact that the archaeological record of the region is marked by research on the *polis* of Anthedon and its harbour is clear also from the graph (fig.3 – ‘personal or group interest’ value). Also, no rescue excavation has been carried out in the area, and this is mainly due to the marginality of the region itself, which means reduced road construction, no large scale or monitored building activities, etc.

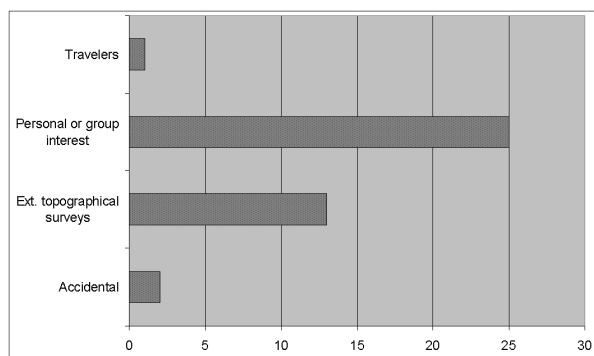


Fig.3. Graph illustrating the proportion of components discovered within different research frameworks.

In fig.4 we can see the relationship between known archaeological sites and the distance from the modern road network. Correspondence is indeed very strong, but it can be due in part to the lack of intensive and systematic surveys, and the consequent absence of known records related to the rural landscape, to the particular topographical situation of the area and to the pathways followed recurrently by past and present routes.

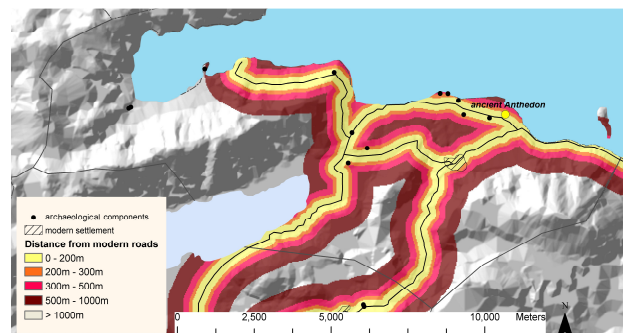


Fig.4. Relationship between components and modern road network.

The ratio of known Prehistoric to Greco-Roman components is 13 to 23 (1:1.7), while among the historical periods, 43% are dated Archaic to Hellenistic, 43% Roman-Late Roman, and 14% are attributed to the general Greco-Roman period.

A relatively large number of Prehistoric sites are known compared to historical ones, and this could be due mainly to research (predominantly topographical) focused on hilltop or prominent sites led by personal research interest (such as the search for Late Prehistoric hilltop

settlements), but also, as pointed out earlier, to the relatively small number of sites known in total.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHORA LANDSCAPE

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

Prehistoric occupation is known for the site of ancient Anthedon itself. The only certain Neolithic activity focus known is on a hill outside the later city wall (*component AN_13*). Also at Tourlo (*components AN_14, AN_15 and AN_39*), traces of Prehistoric occupation are reported (probably since the Neolithic). The sites are both on low hills by the sea shore – see fig.5 in chapter II.3.11.

In the area at the N edge of Paralimni lake, a suitable landscape for Prehistoric occupation, Prehistoric activity foci are known at the Paralimni Pyrgos site and at a location to its E/NE, where traces of activity foci and burials have been found for the EH and LH periods³ – see figs. 6 to 8 in chapter II.3.11.

GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY⁴

Town level

Anthedon is the only town-level settlement present in the area. It was mainly a harbour city, which constituted a crucial passage towards Euboea, and appears to have flourished especially in Classical/Hellenistic periods, under the control of Thebes.

As mentioned earlier, the city might have known a period of decadence in Roman times, as historical sources (Strabo IX 405; Plutarchus *Quaest.Gr.* 19) seem to point out, as does the archaeological record, indirectly. A Roman grave ploughed up in a private plot (*component AN_41*) within the Kastri site could be an indication of a shrinking of the town site in the Roman period (see also below).

Village level

Second-rank settlements are not known for the area, though several attempts have been made to recognise settlement sites (*komai*) at the village of Loukisia, as well as at the Paralimni Pyrgos site (identified with ancient *Isos* by some scholars), and further in the Skroponeri bay (see appendix I.13). In fact, the town of Anthedon being mainly concerned with harbour activities, there might have been space for another nucleated settlement centre of agricultural activities. It is not necessary, however, to consider it a certainty, as the inhabitants of Anthedon, in addition to people living in farmsteads all over the landscape (a picture typical of other Boeotian areas, which can not be excluded here as long as no intensive research is done in the countryside), could have farmed the available area (see also below).

Rural segment

As noted earlier, the rural segment of the landscape is as yet unknown. Information on it could be provided only by an intensive and systematic programme of research throughout the countryside.

Burial areas

As far as the available archaeological record indicates, there is no evidence of burial areas from historical periods, though we might suppose burials linked at least to the known settlement sites. Exceptions are a few signs of a Roman cemetery area by the city site (*components AN_40 and AN_41*).

Cult places/Religious areas

Only an extramural sanctuary (*component AN_12*) is known for the area, in the immediate outskirts of Anthedon *polis*.

Forts and fortifications

Fossey (Teiresias suppl. ii (1979) 10) argues that the Skroponeri bay could have been a base – perhaps the main one – for the 4th C Boeotian fleet, and identifies as possible sites linked to this use the Skroponeri Kastro site – *component AN_24* (which Fossey mentions together with the peninsula site, *components AN_21 to AN_23*), as well as the evidence at Tourlo, interpreted as one of the 4th C watch posts protecting the Skroponeri naval base (Fossey 1988: 26)⁵.

LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS IN THE CHORA LANDSCAPE

The main settlement in the area of Anthedon was always at the harbour site (Mandraki locality) and/or at the nearby acropolis ridge known as Kastri (Early Hellenistic to Late Roman times – *components AN_1 to AN_9*). The area constitutes a crucial passage towards Euboea. For the Neolithic period too (*component AN_13*), a settlement site has been recognised on a small hill by the shore to the W/NW of the later settlement location.

Today, the area as a whole contains only one village, Loukisia, 2km inland from the Mandraki/ancient Anthedon city site. Modern Loukisia is an Albanian village recorded in the Ottoman defters (1466-1646), with possible Byzantine finds also (Bintliff-Kiel in preparation). Being the main habitation focus, it occupies a central position in the *chora* territory. The ancient town of Anthedon has only a peripheral location, as it was geographically and economically orientated to the sea. Moreover, in antiquity the *chora* contained two settlement chambers, as the cost-distance analysis⁶ – fig.5 – shows. The one gravitating on the main settlement was always the coastal plain⁷.

³ Settlement in the area of the lakes is discussed in chapter II.3.12.

⁴ Period maps are included in chapter II.4, figs.18-20-22-24-26-28.

⁵ The *polis* of Anthedon was also fortified [AE559].

⁶ See chapter II.3.1 – LONG TERM SETTLEMENT TRENDS.

⁷ The importance of the coastal site of ancient Anthedon is reinforced by the use of the harbour in Middle Byzantine and Frankish times, as Port Lucaza (Bintliff – Kiel in preparation).

The N edge and part of the Paralimni lake was probably exploited by the second rank settlement which would possibly be in the Paralimni Pyrgos locality (see above – VILLAGE LEVEL), where the remains of a Frankish tower are also visible⁸. The area of Skroponeri could also be a potential settlement chamber, at least in some periods of history, as attested by the settlement gap in the cost-distance analysis as well as by the presence of a village in the Ottoman period (fig.5).

The harbour city flourished in Late Classical – Early Hellenistic times and probably knew great splendour as Thebes' naval base in the 4th C BC (after its importance as a harbour in the Homeric period, with a mention in the Catalogue of Ships). The city might have known a period of decadence in Roman times, as seems to be implied by historical sources (Strabo IX 405; Plutarch Quaest.Ge. 19), as well as by indirect archaeological evidence. A Roman grave ploughed up in a private plot (*component AN_41*) within the acropolis of Kastri could be an indication of a shrinking of the city site in the Roman period. Plutarch's reference to the reduction in wine production (for which the hills as well as the slopes of Mt.Ktipas are certainly suitable – see *Resources* above), as well as the apparent absence of Roman remains at the Paralimni Pyrgos site (if part of the Anthedon *chora*),

might also be an indication of decay during the Roman period, which finds a parallel in other Boeotian cities studied intensively by the Boeotia survey project, especially Hyettos, Thespieae and Haliartos (for the latter, however, the decline is related to a precise historical event). In Late Roman times, the harbour and the town must have known another positive and flourishing phase, like the other harbour sites in the region (and in particular those towards the Gulf of Corinth – see chapter II.3.10).

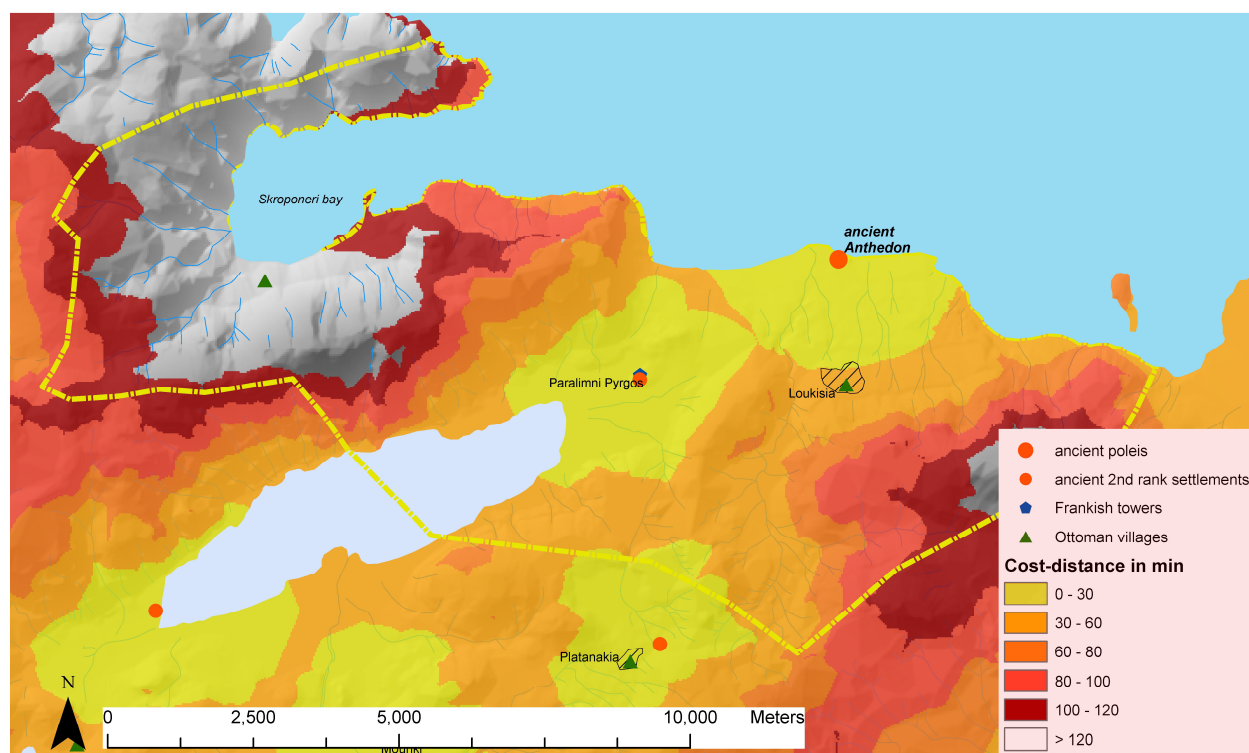


Fig.5. Classified surface representing the cost-weighted distance (1/2 h walking and further ranges) from recognised 1st and 2nd rank ancient settlements (represented by larger and smaller dots). Areas without dots indicate potential settlement chambers. Ottoman villages and Frankish towers have also been added to the map to show their spatial relationship with the Greco-Roman settlement network and to appreciate potential settlement chambers.

⁸ In Frankish times a harbour was located by ancient Anthedon.

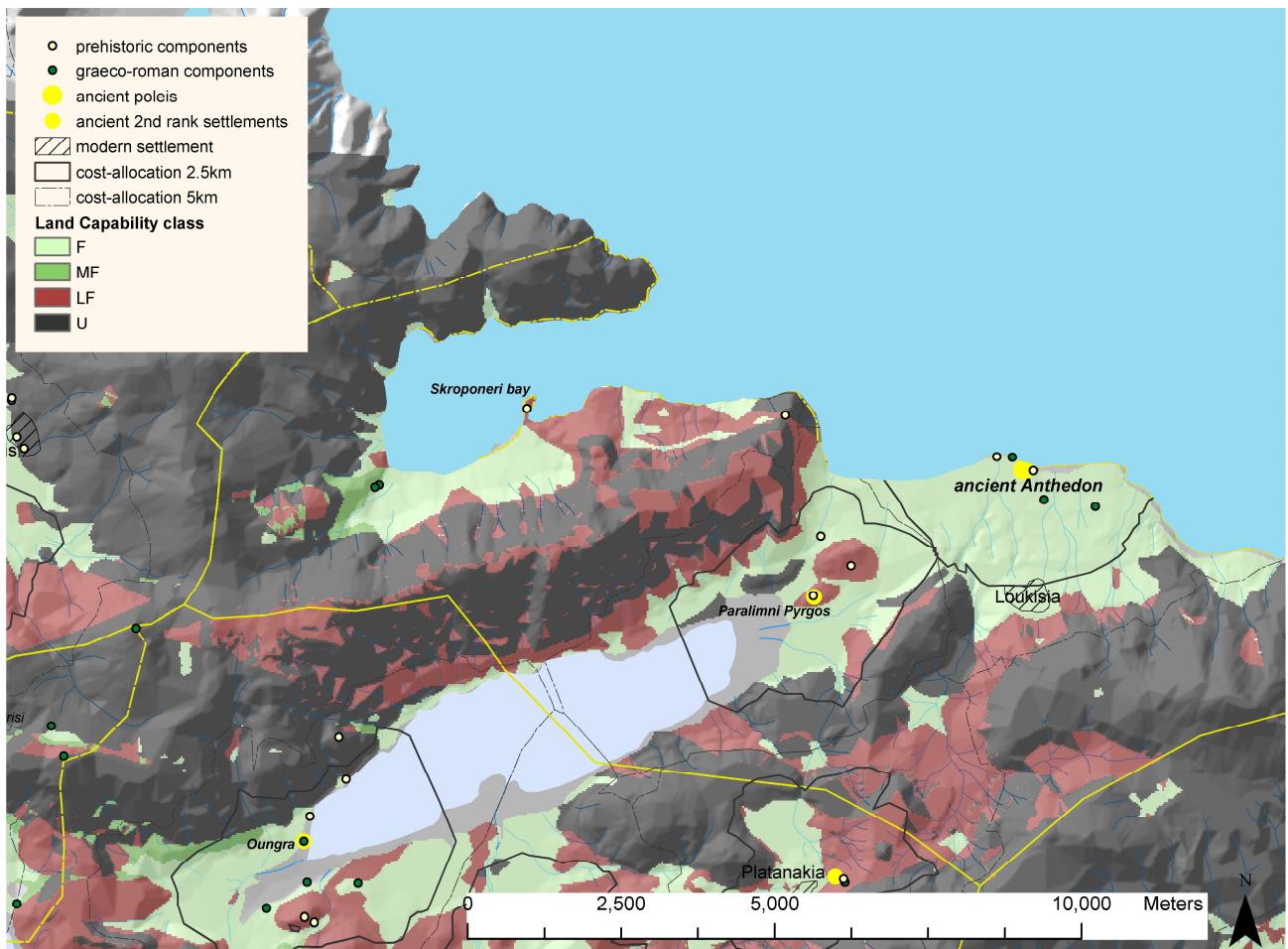


Fig.6. Map showing the Greco-Roman settlement network, the polygons resulting from the cost-distance analysis (marking half an hour and one hour walking time distance) and dots representing the known archaeological components (same as in fig.2), with land capability information underlain.