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THE 2014 MAZI ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT (ATTICA)

Sylvian Fachard, Alex R. Knodell, Eleni Banou

The initial season of the Mazi Archaeological Project (MAP) took place in 2014 as a multidisciplinary regional archaeological survey of the Mazi Plain (Northwest Attica, Greece), conducted as a *synergasia* between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. The primary goal of the project is to research the archaeology, human ecology, and history of this small, yet important, mountain plain. The prime agricultural land, pivotal location on land routes between Attica and Boeotia, and prominent sites of Eleutherai and Oinoe attest to this significance. The region has not, however, received much archaeological attention and has never been subject to the type of systematic study currently underway. MAP aims to address long-term questions of human occupation, human-environmental interaction, territoriality, and connectivity in all periods, ranging from prehistory to the present<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The first season took place between June 13 and July 11 2014, under the codirection of E. Banou for the Ministry of Culture (3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate), and S. Fachard (University of Geneva, Swiss National Science Foundation) and A. Knodell (Carleton College) for the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. The team consisted of: S. E. Alcock (Brown University), J. F. Cherry (Brown University), C. Cloke (University of Cincinnati), F. Higelin (University of Geneva), S. Ion (University of Cincinnati), T. Krapf (Universities of Basel and Paris), S. Murray (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), C. Peverelli (University of Basel), E. Svana (3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate), E. Tsalkou (3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate), P. Valta (3<sup>rd</sup> Ephorate). Special thanks must go to G. Ackermann (University of Lausanne) for the study of the Late Classical and Hellenistic pottery, J. Wallrodt (University of Cincinnati) for his expertise in database matters, and M. and M.-L. Munn (Penn State) for sharing their knowledge of the region and results of the Skourta Plain Survey. Fieldwork was made possible thanks to a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation, as part of the “Borders of Attica” project directed by Sylvian Fachard. The Ephorate provided the storage and study facilities, and its staff facilitated the research in the field as well as the study of the finds. Substantial support was provided by Carleton College and the Digital Globe Foundation. The authors also wish to thank P. Ducrey for his support.

### *The Study area*

The Mazi Plain is situated in the northwestern part of the modern prefecture of Attica, some 16 km north of Eleusis and 20 km south of Thebes (*fig. 1*). This elongated basin is located some 320 m above sea level and stretches some 8 × 3 km on an east-west axis. To the south, it connects to the small plain of Kouloumbi, separated by the Lioupiarthi limestone ridge. The Mazi plain is bounded to the north and south by the Kithairon-Pastra and Makron mountain ranges<sup>2</sup>. Several mountain streams flow into the plain and gather at its southeastern extremity, forming the Sarantapotamos, which emerges in the plain of Eleusis. The project area is thus comprised of complex terrain encompassing a wide range of landforms<sup>3</sup>. The valley bottom is now almost entirely dedicated to agriculture, primarily wheat and vines, with a variety of other crops interspersed. The surrounding slopes, mostly limestone, are now covered with thick maquis and pine forest. With the exception of the current village of Oinoe, the density of modern constructions is quite low, in contrast to the nearby urban and industrial sprawl of Athens and Eleusis.

Situated on the borders of Attica and Boeotia, and on the main road between Eleusis and Thebes, the Mazi Plain is both a boundary and a crossroads on regional and interregional land routes. From the Late Archaic period onward, the valley was settled and farmed by two major settlements, the Attic deme of Oinoe on the eastern edge and the town of Eleutherai in the west. Oinoe, of the Hippothontis tribe<sup>4</sup>, is renowned for being the first Attic town to have been besieged in the Peloponnesian

<sup>2</sup> See A. Philippson, *Die Griechischen Landschaften: Eine Landeskunde I*, 2. Der Nordosten der Griechischen Halbinsel (Frankfurt 1951) 522–533.

<sup>3</sup> A detailed geomorphological study is being conducted by D. Vandarakis and N. Liosis (Harokopio University, Athens) and K. Pavlopoulos (Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi).

<sup>4</sup> J. Traill, *Demos and Trittys* (Toronto 1986) 137; D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica. 508/7 – ca. 250 B.C.* (Princeton 1986) 372–373; J. Ober, *Greek Horoi: Artifactual Texts and the Contingency of Meaning*, in: D. B. Small (ed.), *Methods in the Mediterranean: Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology* (Leiden 1995) 112–114.

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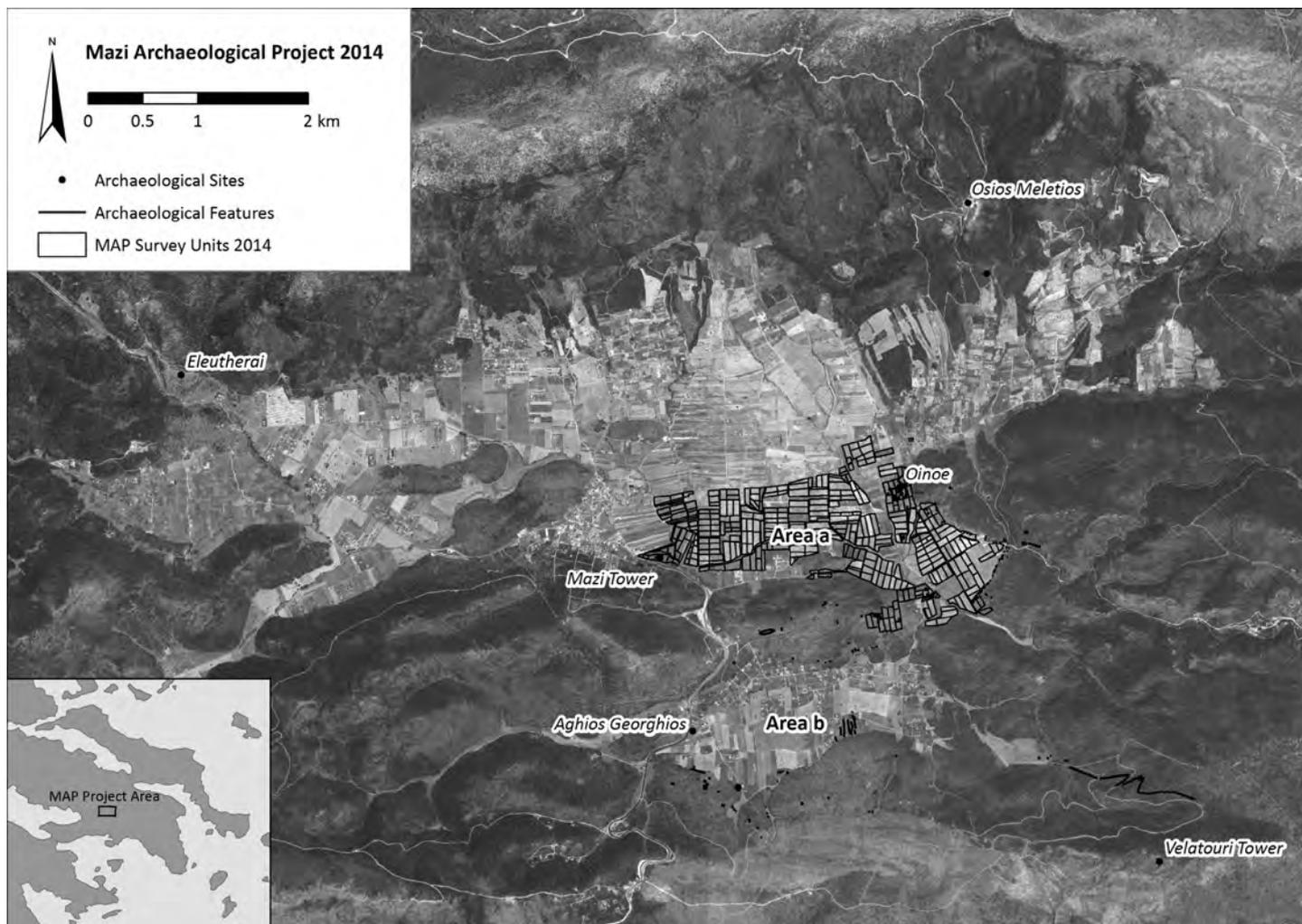


Fig. 1 Survey units and features documented in the course of the 2014 field season in Areas a and b

invasion of Attica in 431 BCE (Thucydides 2, 18, 1–2), an episode which establishes that the site was already well fortified at that time<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, the archaeology of the site remains relatively poorly known.

Eleutherai is located some 6 km west of Oinoe at the foot of the Kaza pass, leading into Boeotia. Eleutherai's origins are Boeotian, and it never became an Attic deme<sup>6</sup>. As a border town, it switched sides between Attica and Boeotia over several centuries<sup>7</sup>. The settlement of Eleutherai is dominated by a limestone acropolis, seat of one of the best-preserved and most spectacular fortresses of

Mainland Greece<sup>8</sup>. Long thought to have been one of the major Athenian fortresses defending entry into Attica, the fortress above Eleutherai now seems most likely to have been built by the Boeotians, under the aegis of Thebes<sup>9</sup>.

In sum, this area is a complex yet well defined landscape, a historical *lieu de passage*, and a significant agricultural and economic surface in the historical borderlands between Attica and Boeotia. By surveying the entirety of this microregion, between and around Eleutherai and Oinoe, MAP aims to illuminate the long-term history of this contested landscape.

<sup>5</sup> For more recent work on Oinoe, see Vanderpool 1978, 231–232; Ober 1985, 154–155; Lauter 1992, 81–84; Fachard 2013, 92–93.

<sup>6</sup> For a recent discussion of Eleutherai, see Fachard 2013, 189.

<sup>7</sup> The town was partially ruined at the time of Pausanias' visit in the second century CE (Paus. 1, 38, 9). On the archaeological remains see E. G. Stikas, Ανασκαφή "Ελευθερών", *Praktika*, 1939, 44–52; Ober 1987, 213–215; Camp 1991, 200; *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* 35, 36.

<sup>8</sup> E. G. Stikas, Ανασκαφή "Ελευθερών" (Πανάκτου), *Praktika* 1938, 41–49; Vanderpool 1978, 231, 242; Ober 1985, 160–163, 223; J. Ober, Early Artillery Towers: Messenia, Boiotia, Attica, Megarid, *AJA* 91, 1987, 582–585, 602–603; Camp 1991, 193–202; Cooper 2000, 155–191; Fachard 2013, 87–91.

<sup>9</sup> See Camp 1991; Cooper 2000; Fachard 2013.

### *Survey methodology*

The Mazi Archaeological Project used a combination of several methods, designed to achieve comprehensive documentation of surface remains across the survey area. Our methods are drawn from the tradition of Mediterranean-style intensive pedestrian survey, largely innovated in Greece in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>. While specific approaches and methods vary between individual projects, “intensive” surveys of this tradition all involve side-by-side fieldwalking in clearly demarcated survey units (often called tracts), a diachronic scope, systematic quantification of artifactual data, and the spatial documentation and analysis of artifact and feature data at both sites and “off-site” locations. While MAP embraces all of these trends, we also aim to make methodological contributions of our own, partly influenced by and building upon recent work that has emphasized equal coverage (as opposed to zonal sampling) of an entire landscape and innovative use of Geographical Information Systems and various forms of remote sensing<sup>11</sup>.

The specific methods employed in the 2014 field season are intensive fieldwalking, used to quantify and collect the distribution of artifacts across the landscape, and extensive exploratory survey, used to map and document archaeological features throughout the survey area, and as a primary method for data collection where the side-by-side methods of our intensive survey were deemed impossible or impractical (e.g., summits, ridges, and areas with steep slopes or thick vegetation cover). Intensive survey was undertaken in a contiguous area of about 2 sq km on the eastern side of the Mazi Plain, including the vicinities of Ancient Oinoe and the Mazi

Tower (Area a). Extensive survey was conducted within and around this area, as well as in and around the Kou-loumbi Plain in the southern extent of the survey area (Area b) (*fig. 1*). These constitute our primary methods of diachronic data collection on a regional scale.

### Intensive Pedestrian Survey

Fieldwalking teams typically consisted of 6–7 individuals: 5 fieldwalkers and 1 or 2 team leaders responsible for iPad-based data recording and GPS-based mapping<sup>12</sup>. The boundaries of survey units are determined in the field, based on the natural topography and current land-use. We did, however, aim to maintain relative consistency in the size of survey units at ca. 50 × 100 m (or 0,5 ha). Survey units were mapped by recording GPS points and integrated into the project GIS. Fieldwalkers walked side-by-side across the landscape, spaced evenly at 10 m apart. As they walked, they observed and collected artifacts within a 2 m wide transect (one meter on either side of their line). This means that for each survey unit, a 20% sample was subject to quantification and collection. Fieldwalkers counted all ceramic artifacts (pottery and tile) and collected all diagnostic sherds within their 2 m transect. All lithic finds were counted and collected, and any other ancient remains (coins, slag, etc.) were recorded separately. We counted and recorded all modern material, in order to study current land-use patterns through the distribution of contemporary material culture across the landscape. Counts of materials were recorded for each individual fieldwalker, entered into the field form for the individual survey unit, along with information about current land-use, vegetation, photographs, and the circumstances of collection – visibility, time of day, lighting, etc.

<sup>10</sup> J. F. Cherry, *Frogs Round the Pond: Perspectives in Current Archaeological Survey Projects*, in: D. Keller – D. Rupp (eds.), *Archaeological Survey in the Mediterranean Area*, British Archaeological Reports, International series 155, 1983, 375–416.

<sup>11</sup> A. R. Knodell – S. E. Alcock, *Brown University Petra Archaeological Project: The 2010 Petra Area and Wadi Sulaysil Survey*, Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan 55, 2011, 489–508; A. Bevan – J. Conolly, *Mediterranean Islands, Fragile Communities and Persistent Landscapes: Antikythera in Long-Term Perspective* (Cambridge 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Our database was constructed by C. F. Cloke, with the help of J. Wallrodt, using Filemaker Pro 13 software, operated on iPads with the Filemaker Go application. GIS mapping and analysis was done using ESRI's ArcGIS 10.1 and ArcPad 10.2 software.

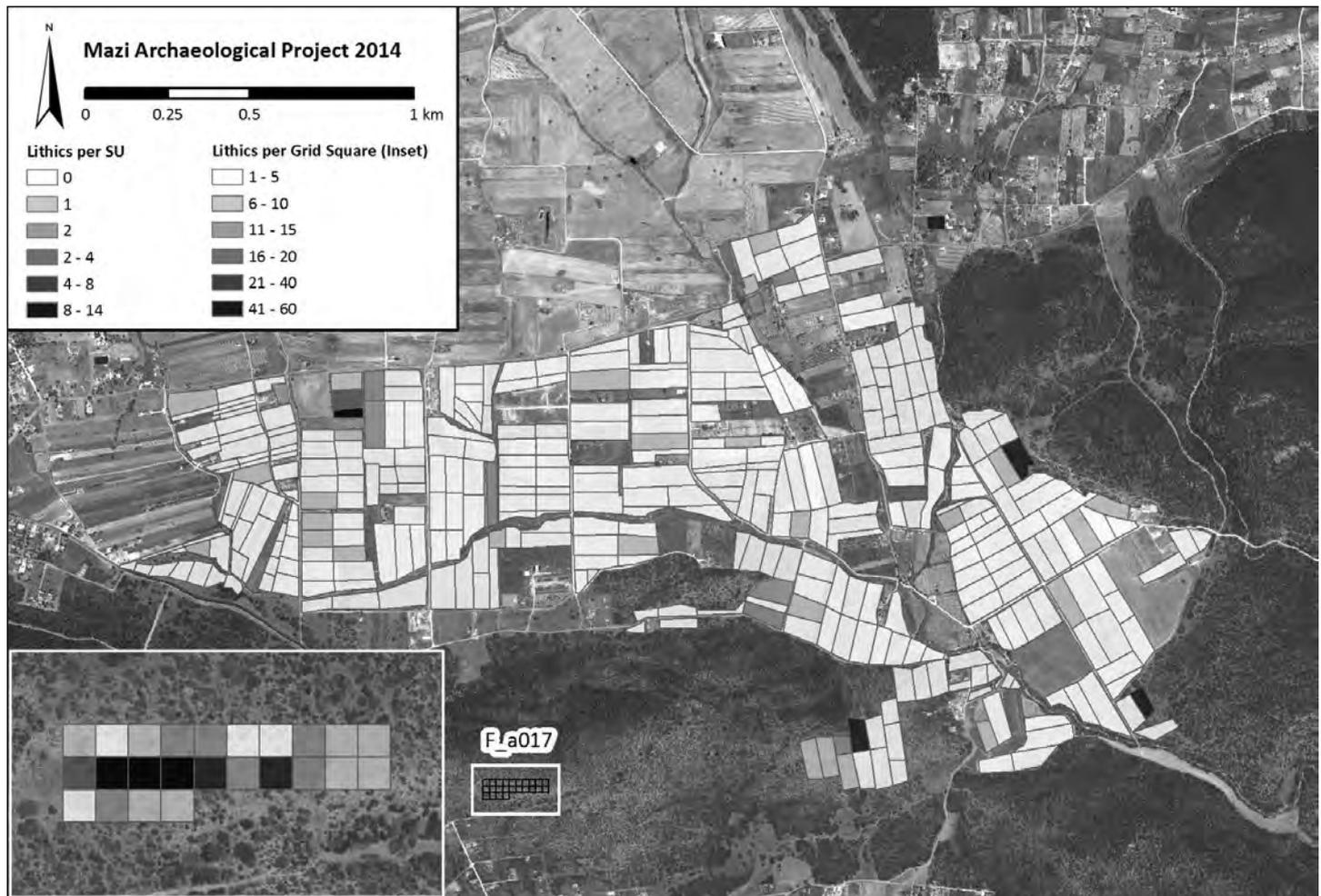


Fig. 2 Distribution of Lithic finds in Area a, and gridded collection of feature F\_a017

### Feature Documentation and Extensive Survey

Field teams recorded, mapped, and documented archaeological features observed in the course of the intensive and extensive pedestrian survey. Common feature types included walls, structures, compounds, roads, rock cuttings, and wells. We also mapped and documented sites previously mentioned by our predecessors. Detailed mapping allowed us to produce plans of individual features (ranging from sketch maps to architectural drawings, as appropriate), which we then integrated into our project GIS to produce total plans of the location, orientation, and extent of all archaeological features in relation to each other, survey units, and the natural landscape (*fig. 1*)<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to documentation of the features themselves, we also conducted limited artifact collection in the form of “grab samples” where appropriate.

### Results of the 2014 Field Season

In the 2014 field season MAP intensively surveyed 370 Survey Units (SUs) with an average size of slightly more than 0,5 ha. This resulted in total coverage of approximately 2 sq km. Intensive survey was conducted only in Area a while extensive survey took place in Areas a and b. In total 109 features and feature complexes were recorded, 68 in Area a and 41 in Area b. What follows below is a brief summary of our findings in roughly chronological order.

### Chipped stone

Lithics were found in low, but distinct, concentrations throughout the survey area (*fig. 2*). In total, 446 pieces of chipped stone were collected, 92 from SUs and 354 from the gridded collection of a single feature, F\_a017<sup>14</sup>. The

<sup>14</sup> J. F. Cherry studied all of the chipped stone, and the preliminary observations noted on this material are largely thanks to him.

overwhelming majority of the assemblage is obsidian: only 16 pieces (17,4%) from SUs and 15 pieces (4,2%) from F\_a017 are of chert or other materials. While there is no guarantee that all of this material is prehistoric, all material collected in 2014 that can be reasonably dated can be accommodated within the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods.

In contrast to the relatively low densities found on the plain, a dense lithic scatter was noted on the Lioupiarthi limestone ridge, during extensive survey. The high concentrations of obsidian encountered over a rather large distance led us to conduct a systematic gridded collection of the site<sup>15</sup>. 339 of 354 collected pieces in this total assemblage were of obsidian<sup>16</sup>. J. F. Cherry reports three main observations: First, this location seems not to have been a settlement in antiquity, but perhaps rather a place where hunting may have taken place. Second, the people utilizing this site may have arrived with chert tools made elsewhere, and with obsidian preforms from which they struck blades, either for direct use as cutting tools, or as blanks to create various piercing and scraping tools. Third, this assemblage appears to be Neolithic in date, on the basis of the morphology of some of the formal tools, especially the projectile points and scrapers<sup>17</sup>.

#### Prehistoric and historical period ceramics

Ceramic materials were widely distributed throughout the survey area (*fig. 3*). Pottery and tile were counted and collected separately, although there is a high correlation in their relative density. While pottery and tile both were found in 99,7% of SUs, densities of off-site scatters were typically very low, with higher concentrations at and in the vicinity of the main built features. The overall pattern suggested by the results so far seems to be one of primary activity zones (shown by high artifact densities and

structural remains) around the edges of the plain, with more limited – most likely agricultural – activity in the interior. There are exceptions, of course, to this broad trend, and it is still far too early to tell if it will hold for the rest of the plain.

To our knowledge, no Bronze Age activity has been previously recorded in the Mazi Plain. Therefore, the discovery of Bronze Age sherds in our field survey is quite significant for our understanding of the area in this period. Evidence remains slim, however. There are a few possible Early Helladic and Middle Helladic sherds, but the best evidence comes from a limited concentration of Mycenaean pottery discovered northwest of Oinoe, on a gentle slope leading to the present river. This small assemblage includes 5 kylix stems. Other Mycenaean finds were found 1,7 km southwest of here, in the same set of survey units that boasted the highest concentration of lithics in the survey area (SUs a253 and a254). In any case, these preliminary results attest a Bronze Age occupation of the Mazi plain, which was previously untested.

Only a few Late Geometric sherds were tentatively identified, but their date remains uncertain at this stage of the study. When added to a single find from Eleutherai<sup>18</sup>, a Geometric occupation of the plain is possible, although the evidence remains minimal. The Archaic period is poorly represented, with finds mostly concentrated around Oinoe. As is often the case in rural surveys in Greece, the climax of occupation is reached in the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the deme site of Oinoe is clearly the dominant hub of settlement in the eastern part of the Mazi Plain. The overall settlement pattern, however, is more complex, as shown by the discovery of several secondary locations of activity. We also documented widespread distributions of Late Roman pottery, as well as Byzantine and later material. These relatively coarse descriptions of chronological distributions are of course only a preliminary account. Certain locations, however, such as roads, farms, towers, concentrated artifact scat-

<sup>15</sup> This consisted of total collection of 24 squares 20 × 20 m in size.

<sup>16</sup> The main use of the site seems to have been the production of prismatic blades, of which 40 fragments and one complete example were found.

<sup>17</sup> cf. C. Perlès, *Industries lithiques*, in: N. Lambert (ed.), *La Grotte Préhistorique de Kitsos (Attique): Missions 1968–1978*, vol. 1 (Paris 1982) 129–223.

<sup>18</sup> American School of Classical Studies at Athens, sherd collection. We are grateful to Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan for providing access.

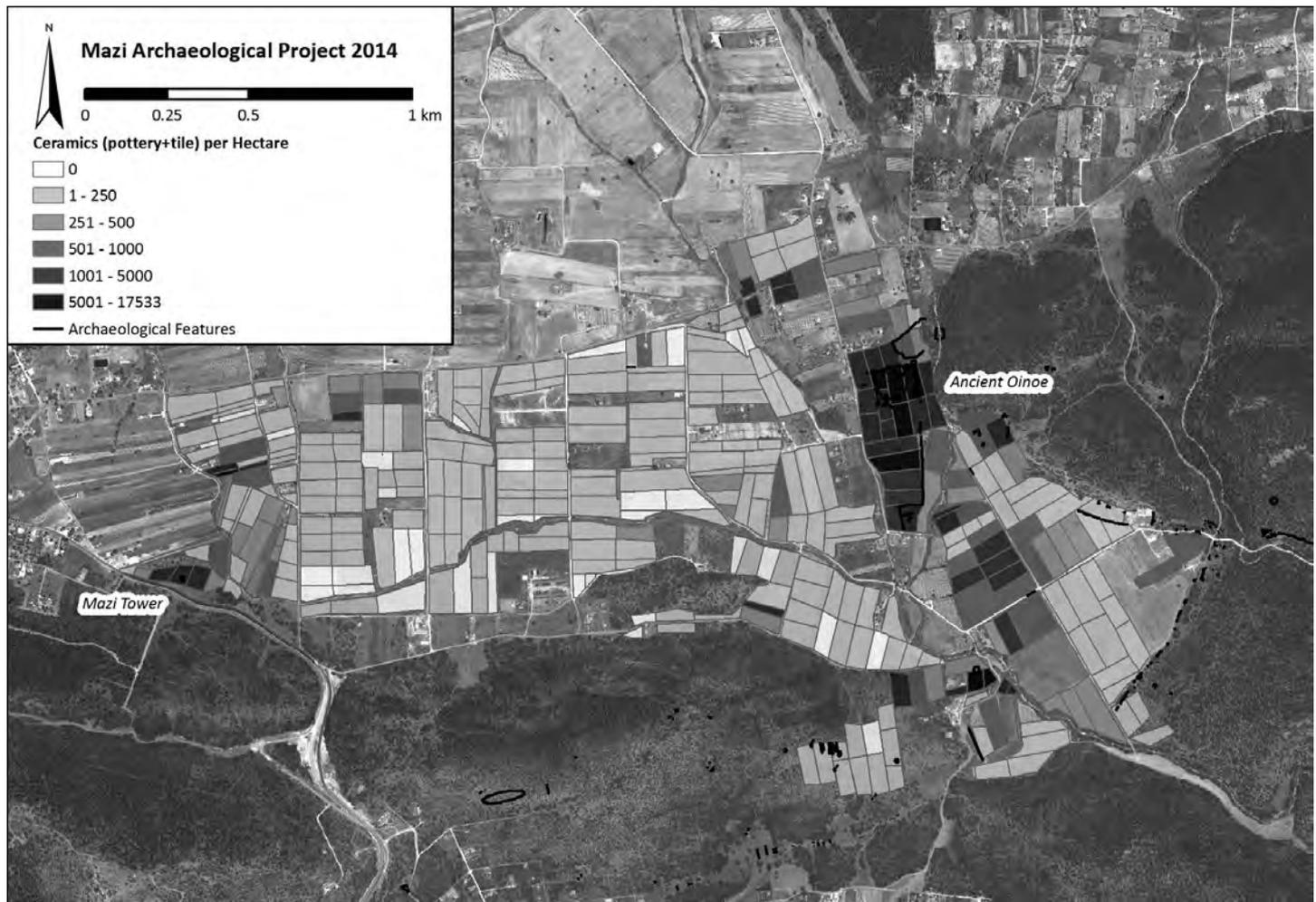


Fig. 3 Distribution of Ceramic (pottery and tile) finds in Area a

ters, and low “off-site” distributions, are already giving us much new and detailed information concerning the history of settlement, which we discuss below.

#### The fortified deme site of Oinoe

A high priority of MAP is to produce a detailed architectural study of Oinoe, which includes the first comprehensive plan of the site<sup>19</sup>. This is a substantial task, due to the size of the site, the vegetation, and the density of multi-period remains. Following vegetation clearing, the site was mapped with a total station and a precise stone-by-stone plan of the fortification walls was drawn at the scale of 1:50<sup>20</sup>. Numerous remains of buildings, walls and streets covering the internal surface of the fortified area

were drawn with a combination of traditional methods and aerial photogrammetry<sup>21</sup>.

The fortified settlement of Oinoe (*fig. 4; fig. 5 no. 1*) is divided between an upper town, occupying a low limestone plateau, and a lower town spreading into the fields to the south. The rectangular plan of the site (150 m north-south and 136 m east-west) is unusual in Classical Greek defensive architecture. At least three different building phases can be recognized: Late Classical, Early Hellenistic and Late Roman. In the lower town, the Late Antique fortifications (perhaps reusing the Classical walls), seem to delimit an area of c. 3,9 ha (so c. 5,6 ha for the total fortified area). Pottery and tile densities inside these limits contrast sharply with those found outside (*fig. 3*). Such a strong difference would support the existence of a lower town with a clearly demarcated border, likely in the form of a fortification. Surface finds

<sup>19</sup> Only sketch plans exist, see Vanderpool 1978, 235 fig. 3; Lauter 1992, 83 fig. 4, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Drawing by I. Nakas.

<sup>21</sup> We thank R. Frederiksen and S. Handberg (Danish Institute) for their collaboration.

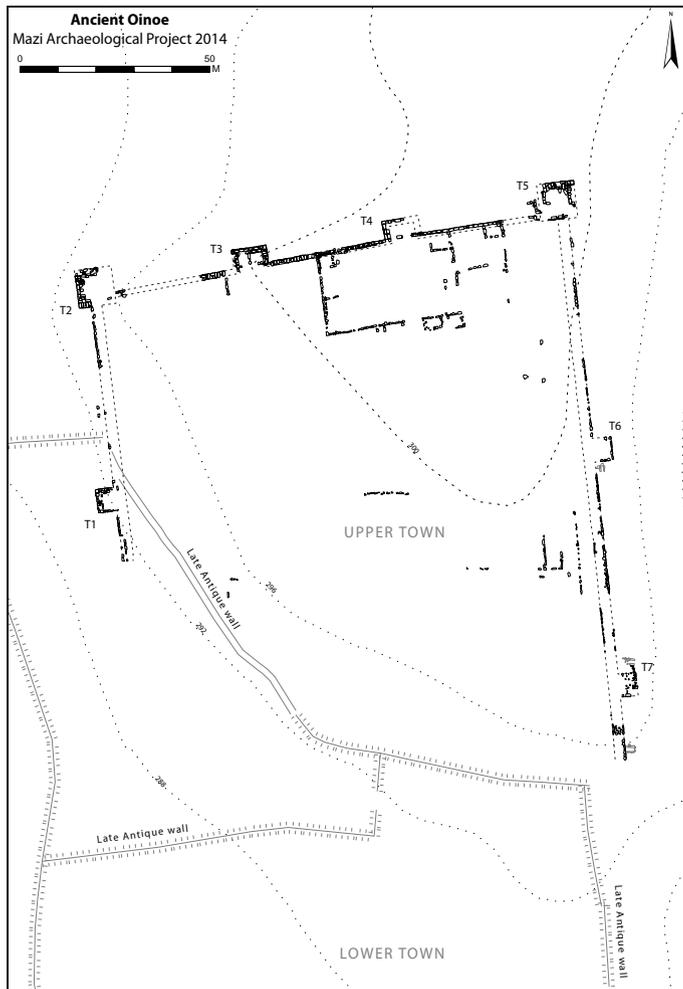


Fig. 4 Provisional plan of Ancient Oinoe

include pottery, glazed tiles, amphoras and several beehives, showing a dense occupation in the Classical, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods.

#### Other locations of special interest

Several secondary settlements were discovered in addition to Oinoe. The first one, at Stanes Pepas, is located some 800 m south of Oinoe (fig. 5 no. 2). Deep plowing has revealed a very high density of pottery and tiles concentrated over an area of 0,5 ha. The pottery shows activity from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the (mostly) early Hellenistic period, and again in the Roman and Early Christian periods. A small hamlet here, situated between the Mazi Plain to the north and Kouloumbi Valley to the south, would be well suited to exploit both areas.

A second focus of settlement is found around the well-known Mazi Tower, standing 14 m high, 2,2 km west of Oinoe (fig. 5 no. 3). This tower is most often described as

a military post guarding the road to Eleutherai, although this view has been recently challenged<sup>22</sup>. The field survey reveals that the Mazi Tower is situated in an area of very high pottery and tile density, spread over about 1 ha. The Hellenistic pottery – comprised of cooking and storage wares, including a pithos – may indicate habitation in the vicinity between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, and again in the Late Roman<sup>23</sup>.

One of the most significant findings was a long stretch of the ancient Eleusis-Oinoe road, a vital link with the rest of Attica and Athens<sup>24</sup>. The westernmost section of this road includes six zigzag switchbacks as it descends into the Kouloumbi Valley (F\_b012; fig. 5 no. 4)<sup>25</sup>. Traces of wheel ruts were spotted on several points. A Classical-Hellenistic child's cist grave made of tiles was found near where the road enters the Kouloumbi Valley (F\_b013; fig. 5 no. 5). This and the presence of walls, rock cuttings and an old (possibly ancient) well suggest substantial activity in the area. The need to exploit the eastern part of the Kouloumbi Valley would justify the presence of a small settlement here.

Traffic along the Oinoe road would have been well monitored by the Velatouri Tower (F\_b010; fig. 5 no. 6). The tower is 8,3 m in diameter, made of polygonal limestone blocks, and preserved to a height of 3 m<sup>26</sup>. Surface pottery, collected among the mass of fallen blocks, suggests construction and occupation in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Walls are found to the S-E, and the surface is littered with

<sup>22</sup> Ober 1985, 155–156; M. Munn (*per epistulam*); S. P. Morris, *The Towers of Ancient Leukas: Results of a Topographic Survey 1991–1992*, *Hesperia* 70, 2001, 340 n. 74; Fachard 2013, 93–94.

<sup>23</sup> 99 tile fragments were found in SUa297, where the tower is located, suggesting a theoretical tile density of 1513 tiles per ha. This seems to exceed the needs of a single tower.

<sup>24</sup> This road, studied by E. Vanderpool, can be traced between Kokkini and the Mazi Plain (Vanderpool 1978, 228–231); on its importance, see S. Fachard – D. Pirisino, *Roads out of Attica*, in: M. M. Miles (ed.), *New Autopsy in Athens* (Oxford 2015) 139–153.

<sup>25</sup> The general location and shape were noted by E. Vanderpool and J. Ober, but not mapped precisely.

<sup>26</sup> For previous descriptions, see Ober 1985, 157–158; H. Lohmann, *Agriculture and Country Life in Classical Attica*, in: B. Wells (ed.) *Agriculture in Ancient Greece* (Stockholm 1992) 40 n. 35; Lohmann 1993, 145, 159–160.

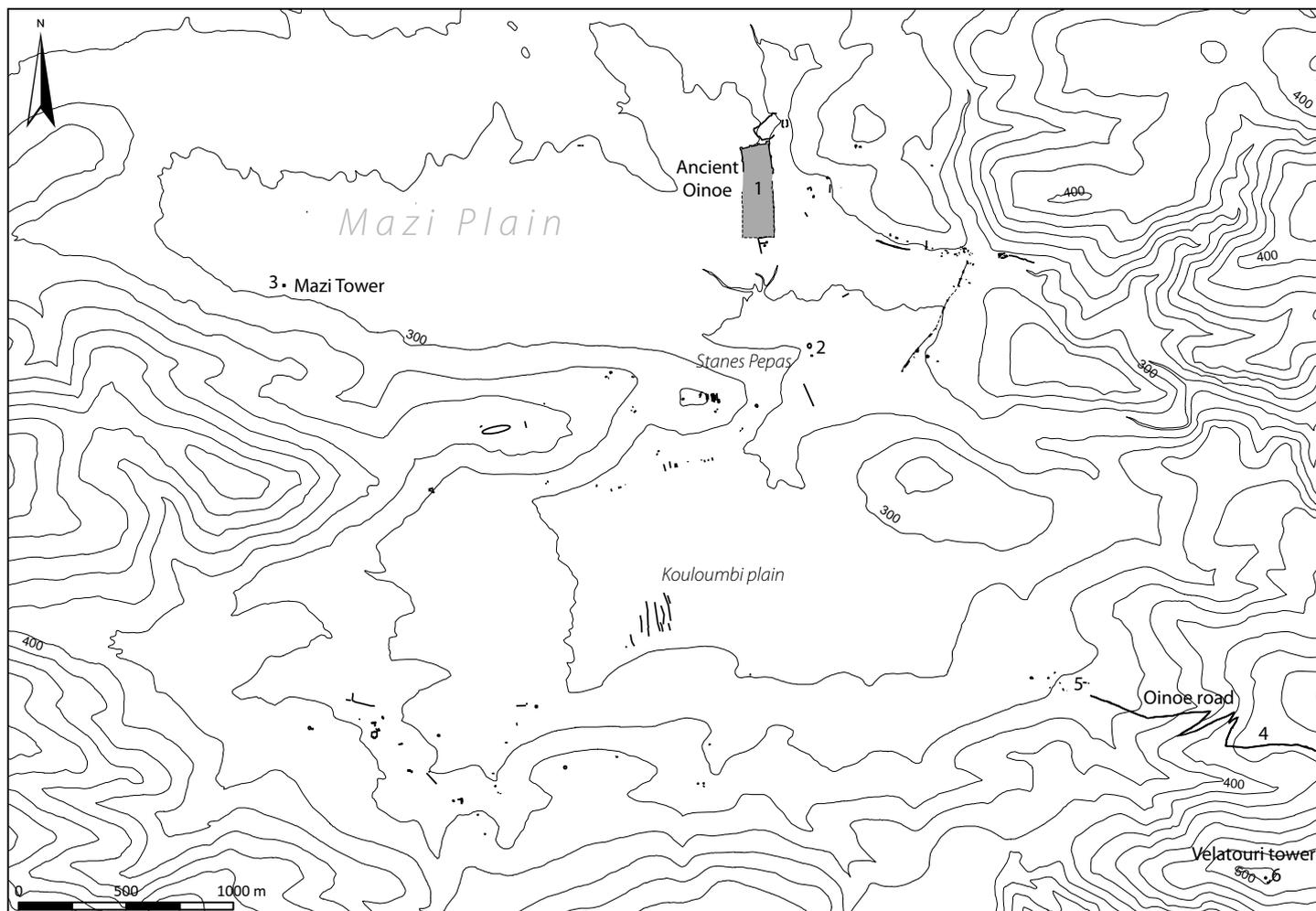


Fig. 5 Distribution of features in Areas a and b

glazed tile fragments. The view from the tower is spectacular, embracing the entire Mazi Plain and most of the region to the south.

### Conclusions

In sum, the 2014 season of MAP provided thorough documentation of the eastern part of the Mazi Plain, with already substantial results. Neolithic occupation of the plain, previously attested only marginally at Eleutherai, now appears to be more widespread<sup>27</sup>. For the Bronze Age, a Mycenaean presence is now attested, thus filling in a substantial gap on the most direct link between Thebes and Eleusis. For the historical periods, Geometric and Early Archaic occupation are conspicuously minimal, though we have as yet examined only a fraction of the total survey area. Unsurprisingly, most aspects of the

built environment and ceramics appear to date to the Classical, Early Hellenistic and Roman periods, though a substantial Byzantine presence is also noteworthy.

At Oinoe, the first architectural plan was drawn, and the entire surface of the site and immediate surroundings was intensively surveyed, thus clarifying the extent of the settlement. Oinoe is one of the very few Attic deme centers to have been surrounded by fortifications, along with Piraeus, Eleusis, Aphidna, Rhamnous, and Sounion. Secondary locations of habitation and activity in the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, suggest a more complex deme settlement pattern than originally thought, consisting of one central nucleated site serving as the deme's administrative center, surrounded by secondary hamlets or *komai*<sup>28</sup>. This evidence suggests intensive agricultural exploitation of the Mazi Plain in these periods.

<sup>28</sup> As fresh data is being collected throughout Attica, this pattern is gradually becoming more common. For a recent treatment of this issue, see D. L. Kellogg, *Marathon Fighters & Men of Maple* (Oxford 2013) 26–34.

<sup>27</sup> Neolithic sherds have been noted in the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, sherd collection (A54), see also Ober 1987, 215.

Overall the results of a single season of survey shed much new light on the Mazi Plain. We have integrated previously known sites into a broader, systematic study of the region, while at the same time adding to our knowledge of these well-known monuments by bringing to bear a range of new techniques. From a methodological point of view, it is the first time in the research history of Attic demes that the surface of a deme-center and its territory are being investigated by intensive survey involving side-by-side fieldwalking and the systematic quantification of artifactual data<sup>29</sup>. The diachronic scope of the project also aims to elucidate what is known to be a complicated political history in the area, with Eleutherai looming to the west. The continuation of the survey through the rest of the study area will provide a unique and exceptionally thorough source of data for understanding the occupational history of this important microregion on the borders of Attica.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 The Mazi Archaeological Project study area and its regional context: Survey units and features documented in the course of the 2014 field season of MAP in Areas a and b.
- Fig. 2 Distribution of Lithic finds in Area a, and gridded collection of feature F\_a017.
- Fig. 3 Distribution of Ceramic (pottery and tile) finds in Area a.
- Fig. 4 Provisional plan of Ancient Oinoe.
- Fig. 5 Distribution of features in Areas a and b.

Maps and plans by the authors

<sup>29</sup> H. Lohmann's pioneering survey work at Atene did not include this type of systematic intensive survey.