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THE 2015 MAZI ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT:

REGIONAL SURVEY IN NORTHWEST ATTICA (GREECE)

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The Mazi Archaeological Project (MAP) is a diachronic regional survey of the Mazi Plain (Northwest Attica, Greece), operating as a *synergasia* between the Ephorate of Antiquities of West Attika, Piraeus, and Islands and the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece. This small mountain plain is characterized by its critical location on a major land route between central and southern Greece, and on the Attic-Boeotian borders. Territorial disputes in these borderlands are attested from the Late Archaic period¹ and the sites of Oinoe and Eleutherai have marked importance for the study of Attic-Boeotian topography, mythology, and religion. Our approach to regional history extends well beyond the Classical past to include prehistoric precursors, as well as the later history of this part of Greece. Building upon a first season of fieldwork in 2014, in the summer of 2015 MAP undertook intensive and extensive archaeological survey throughout the Mazi Plain. This season included a variety of other methods: photogrammetric modeling, drone-based aerial photography, multi-spectral satellite imagery analysis, differential GPS mapping (DGPS), and geological studies. Highlights include the comprehensive, intensive survey of the eastern and western portions of the Mazi Plain, the discovery of a large prehistoric settlement at Kato Kastanava, new work at Eleutherai, and the location of two substantial Byzantine-period settlements at Aghios Georgios and at Kondita. This article summarizes the results of the 2015 field season and presents preliminary interpretations concerning the long-term history of the Mazi Plain².

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¹ Hdt. 5, 74, 2.

² The second field season of the Mazi Archaeological Project (MAP) took place over five weeks, from 15 June to 17 July 2015. The project is codirected by Sylvian Fachard (University of Geneva), Alex R. Knodell (Carleton College), and Kalliopi Papangeli (Ephorate of Antiquities of West Attika, Piraeus, and Islands). Photogrammetry, DGPS mapping, and gridded collections were overseen by Sarah Murray (University of Nebraska–Lincoln). Survey teams were supervised by Sarah Craft (Florida State University), Marc Duret (University of Geneva), and Maeve McHugh (University College Dublin). Christine Hunziker (University of Geneva) served as registrar. Fotini Kondyli (University of Virginia) studied the Byzantine ceramics. Cor-

Survey areas and methods

In 2015 we conducted fieldwork in three zones: Areas b, c, and e (fig. 1). Area a was the focus during the 2014 field season³, between Ancient Oinoe and the Mazi Tower on the eastern outskirts of Modern Oinoe. Area b corresponds to the Kouloumbi Plain, just south of the Mazi Plain and connected to it via a short passage named Bozari. Area c is immediately north of Area a, in the northeastern part of the survey area, immediately adjacent to the modern delimitation between Attica and Boeotia. Area e is the western end of the Mazi Plain, and includes the settlement and fortress of Eleutherai, at the mouth of the Kaza Pass, as well as the small Prophitis Ilias Valley. Area d is the middle of the Mazi Plain and will be the primary focus of intensive survey coverage in 2016.

For the intensive survey, three separate teams worked in the three different zones (Areas b, c, and e), covering a total of 6,09 sq km (compared with 1,86 sq km with one team in 2014). A total of 1490 survey units were investi-

ing was conducted by Kosmas Pavlopoulos (Paris-Sorbonne, Abu Dhabi/Harokopeio University), Dimitris Vandarakis and Nikos Liosis (both from Harokopeio University); a soil profile study was undertaken by Elisabeth R. Davis (Carleton College). We thank these individuals for their hard work, leadership, and reporting, as well all other team members, without whom this project would not have been possible: Giannis Asvestas, Brandon Baker, Alex Claman, Alex Feldman, Jean-Quentin Haefliger, Thomas Kerboul, Evan Levine, Charlie Linneman, Xavier Mabillard, Brian Niedert, Tim Poenitz, Aude-Line Pradervand, Katerina Ragkou, Catie Steidl, Elaine Sundberg, Eirini Svana, Evgenia Tsalkou, Polytimi Valta, Martin Walwik. We are also grateful to Guy Ackerman, Anastasia Dakouri-Hild, Tobias Krapf, John Papadopoulos, Philip Sapirstein, and Helena Tomas who provided helpful discussions on visits during the field season; and to Sue Alcock, John Cherry, Mark and Mary-Lou Munn, Josiah Ober, and Anthony Snodgrass for their advice and support prior to the field season. Finally, we are most grateful to Stella Chrysoulaki, Ephor of Antiquities of West Attika, Piraeus, and Islands, for her enthusiasm and support for the project.

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³ Fachard – Knodell – Banou 2015.

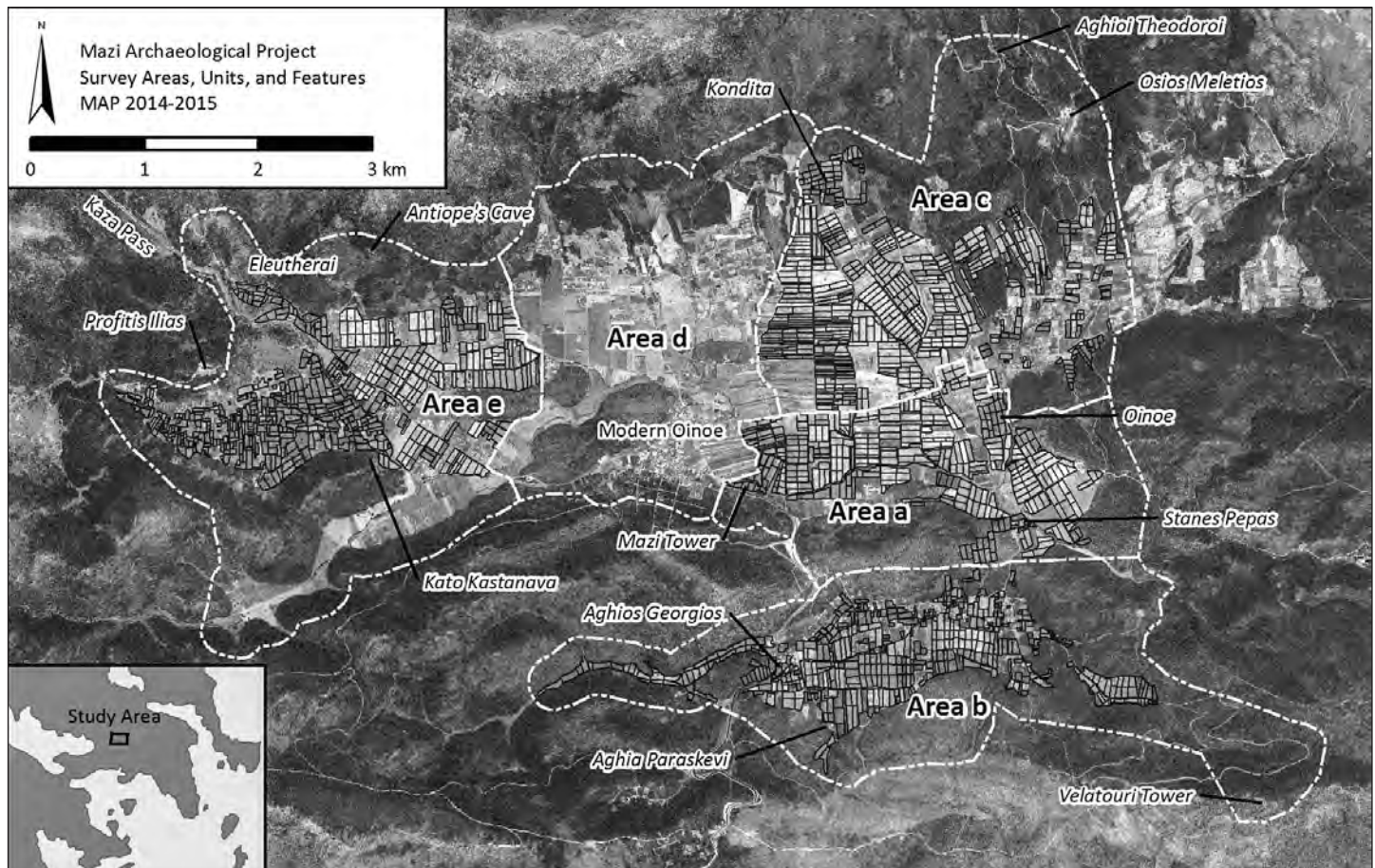


Fig. 1 Overall map of the survey area

Survey Area	# of Survey Units	Total Area Covered (ha)	Average Survey Units Size (ha)	Number of Transects	Number of Features
Area a (2014)	370	186	0,50	1716	72
Area b	437	167	0,38	1926	69 (28 from 2015)
Area c	537	231	0,43	2186	40
Area e	516	211	0,41	2124	148
Total	1860 (1490 in 2015)	795 (609 in 2015)	0,43 (0,41 for 2015)	7952 (6236 in 2015)	329 (216 in 2015)

Table 1: Summary of Mazi Archaeological Project survey areas and coverage

gated, and 216 archaeological features were documented in the course of intensive and extensive survey (table 1).

In addition to the regular collection of ceramics (pottery and tile) and lithics in survey units, we also made sample collections in association with particular features in the course of extensive survey and conducted gridded collection at one location of special significance, which, after preliminary analysis of pottery and lithic assemblages, appears to be a large prehistoric settlement.

With a large team and many different types of work conducted simultaneously, the 2015 field season of MAP

collected a tremendous amount of data (fig. 1; table 2⁴). This article reports our activities, methods, and preliminary interpretations, but we stress that much further

⁴ Of documentation: Differential GPS mapping and photogrammetry at all locations was supervised by Sarah Murray using, for mapping: a Leica CS25 RTK GNSS dGPS survey unit running corrections broadcast through local cell phone networks through a SmartNet subscription; and for photography: a Nikon D7100 camera with a Zeiss Distagon T* 3,5/18 ZF.2 lens. Aerial photography was conducted by Giannis Asvestas using a Phantom 2 drone with a GoPro HERO4 digital camera.

Type of documentation	Area Description	Feature(s)	Notes
Terrestrial Photogrammetry, DGPS Mapping, Aerial Photography	Eleutherai Fortress	F_e156	Model of the northwestern-most tower, the wall descending the hill to the south, the westernmost portion of the northern curtain wall and the first tower along the curtain wall; new architectural plan.
	Eleutherai Temple of Dionysos Eleuthereus	F_eo73	Documentation following cleaning operation in order to render high-resolution photogrammetric model and architectural plan.
	Eleutherai Roman Building	F_eo92	Modeled for high-resolution mapping.
	Church of Aghia Parasekvi	F_bo18	Complete model of the Byzantine church.
	Medieval Tower at Kondita	F_co25	Modeled with photogrammetry.
Terrestrial Photogrammetry, DGPS Mapping	Round structure (Tumulus?)	F_bo37	Located on low hill to the south of Kouloumbi Plain.
	Church of Aghioi Theodoroi	F_co09	Church recently restored by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.
	Small (probably early modern) structure in Area c	F_co16	Modeled primarily as a test of speed and accuracy for the method. Model is spatially accurate to 2 cm, internally accurate to 1/10 of a mm, fieldwork completed in c. 30 mins.
DGPS Mapping, Aerial Photography	Eleutherai Settlement	F_eo71-eo73, F_eo92-eo99, F_e117	Several structures in fenced part of archaeological site mapped. Further mapping needed in surrounding residential area.
	Eleutherai Basilicas	F_e1o2, F_e1o4	Side-by-side, located between Eleutherai fortress and settlement.
	Prehistoric Settlement	F_eo86, F_eo87, F_eo88	Various structures on edge of burned slope in western portion of plain, probably a large prehistoric settlement. Site extends well beyond structures mapped in 2015.
DGPS Mapping	Hilltop round structure (Tumulus?)	F_co18	Round structure similar to F_bo37; too overgrown for photogrammetry.
Aerial Photography	Mazi Tower	F_ao74	Aerial photos of tower and surrounding area.
	Mycenaean findspot north of Oinoe	F_ao75, F_ao76	Located on east side of the plain; several LBA finds, possible architecture.
	Oinoe	F_ao41	Aerial photography in 2014, used to create orthorectified images and architectural plans.

Table 2: Summary of detailed photographic and spatial documentation at sites of particular interest

study of artifact, architectural, and spatial data is necessary and will be conducted in the coming years. Caveats aside, these preliminary results are already evocative of a dynamic landscape history.

Area b

Area b, the Kouloumbi Plain, is located south-east of the Mazi Plain and is connected to it via the passage of Bozari, south of Stanes Pepas (fig. 2). This small valley is alimanted by several minor streams emerging from the

surrounding limestone hills, which gather north-east of the plain before flowing into the main bed of the Sarandapotamos. Today, the main settlements are the old hamlet at the church of Aghios Georgios and the sparsely inhabited *oikismos* of Pournari. Two toponyms are reported in the plain, Karaiskaki at the south-west and Sterna Oikononou at the southeastern extremity, at the point where the ancient road from Eleusis enters the plain⁵. This area is thinly populated, although many of

⁵ Fachard – Knodell – Banou 2015, 184.

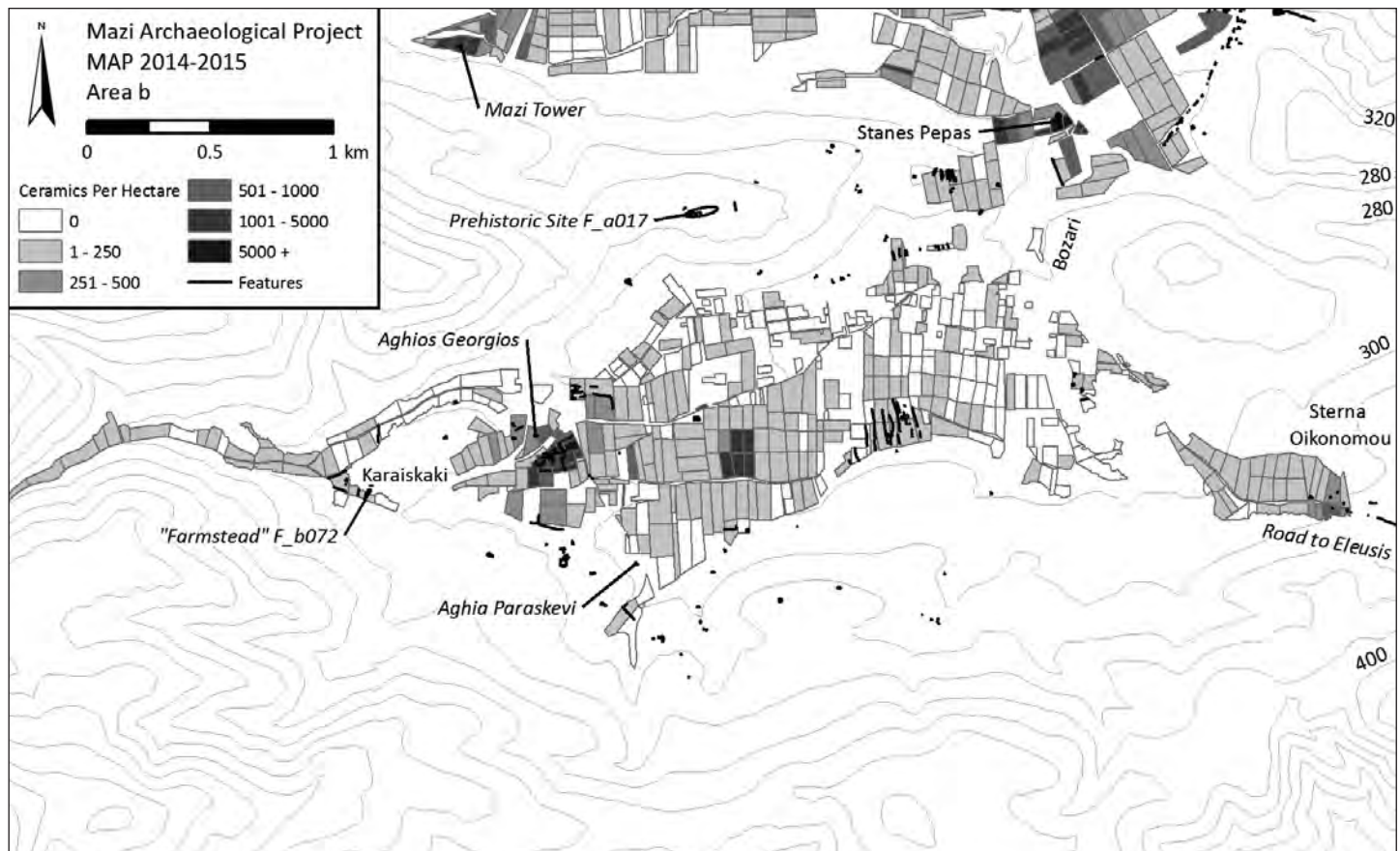


Fig. 2 Map of Area b, indicating ceramic (pottery and tile) densities

the houses are visited regularly by owners or caretakers to water plants or feed dogs – by far the most populous residents of Pournari⁶. Prior to the work of MAP, the only archaeological remains noted in the Kouloumbi Plain were two small churches, of Aghios Georgios (restored)⁷ and of Aghia Paraskevi (in ruins)⁸. Both are located on the west side of the plain.

Team b intensively surveyed 437 survey units and documented 28 features in 2015. The total area covered by intensive survey was 1,67 sq km. Current land-use patterns in the Kouloumbi Plain have certainly affected the archaeological record, especially in terms of the visibility of the ground surface. Over half of the survey units (250) were in currently unused fields, at various stages of overgrowth. Average visibility for Area b as a whole was a meager 37%, with only 58 survey units at 70% or above. However, pottery and lithics were still collected in several fields with low visibility, suggesting that while poor visibility affects the quantity of finds observed and

collected, presence – especially of major remains – is still clearly detectable.

Lithics were present in relatively low densities across Area b, mainly in the form of isolated blade finds throughout the southern and central parts of the area (fig. 3). Several survey units in the central part of the valley, however, had slightly higher concentrations, with as many as four or five chipped stone artifacts collected in each survey unit. As in Area a, the assemblage is predominantly obsidian, and most parts of the plain are inter-visible with F_a017, which we interpret as a Neolithic hunting site, where a large obsidian assemblage was documented by gridded collection in 2014⁹.

The overall pattern of ceramic distribution in Area b showed high-density concentrations associated with particular sites, with very little offsite scatter detected (fig. 2). There are several possible explanations for this, but the most likely seems to be that habitation and settlement were mostly along the edges of the Kouloumbi and Mazi Plains, with the interior used primarily for agricultural land. This is certainly the pattern in the distribution

⁶ Fieldwork in Area b was supervised by Maeve McHugh.

⁷ Orlandos 1939/40, 113–114.

⁸ Bouras – Boura 2002; A. Pantelidou-Alexiadou, *ADelt* 41, 1986, 25.

⁹ Fachard – Knodell – Banou 2015, 181–182 fig. 2.

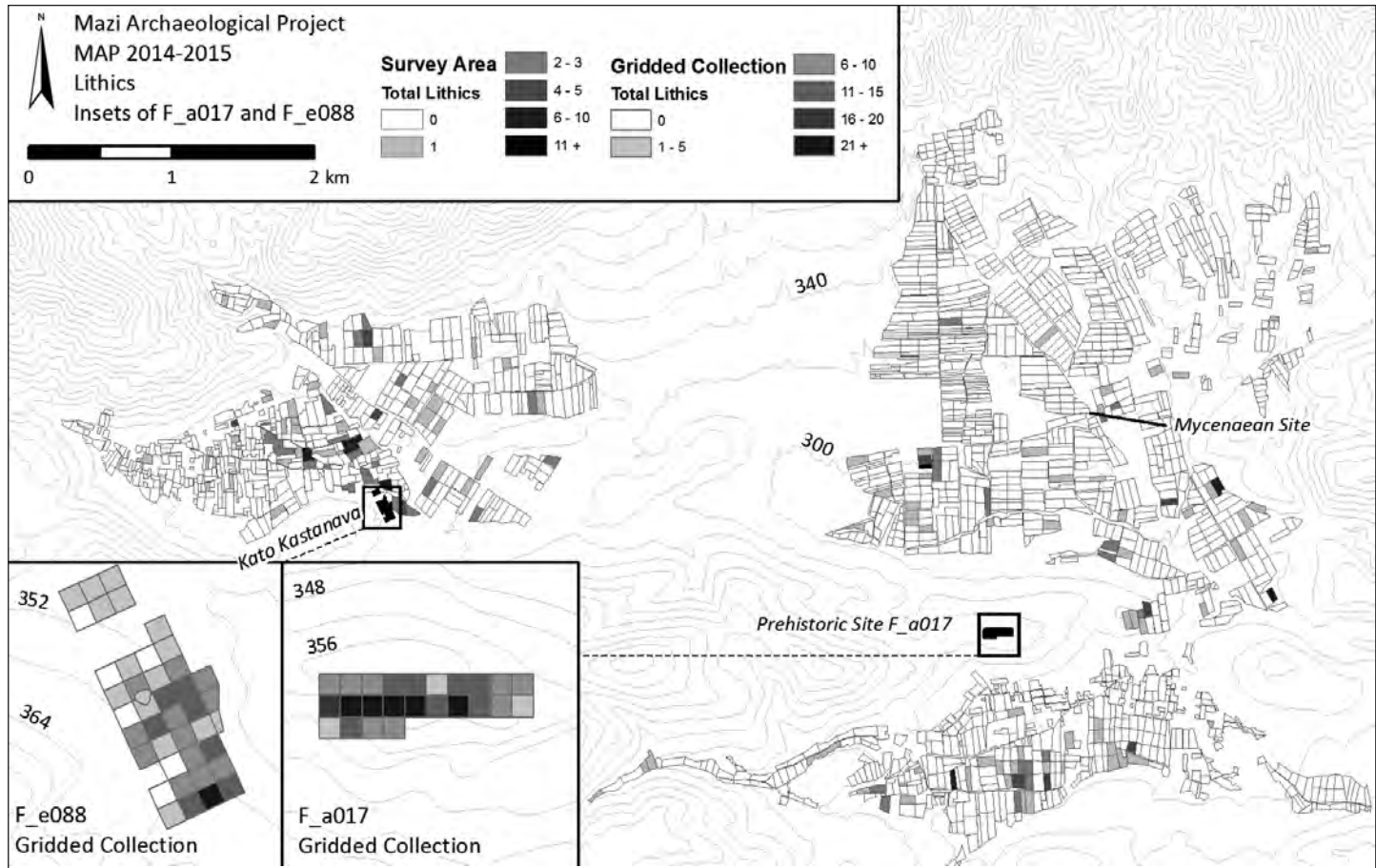


Fig. 3 Distribution of lithic finds in the survey area, with insets of gridded collections at prehistoric sites F_a017 and F_e088

of archaeological features, and holds well for artifact distributions, too – an apparent exaggeration of the pattern seen in 2014 in Area a.

Three areas of interest stand out in Area b as places of particular significance: a substantial – and hitherto unreported – Byzantine settlement (F_b058) in the vicinity of the church of Agios Georgios (F_b048), a concentration of ceramic evidence in the center of the plain, probably from a collapsed structure, and a Classical-Hellenistic complex (F_b072), most likely a farmstead, found on the edges of the plain.

Byzantine settlement at Aghios Georgios

The Byzantine settlement to the west of the plain, on the slope south of the *paralavrio* of Aghios Georgios¹⁰, is a significant discovery for the area and will surely pro-

vide greater insight into how the Byzantine secular and religious landscapes complemented each other in the Kouloumbi Plain. The settlement is spread over several terraces, which may have supported the houses (*fig. 4*). Notable features include at least three cisterns plastered with water-tight mortar and a large basin, possibly for wine production. The documentation of features beyond the limits of the site, particularly the presence of two wells (F_b045 and F_b046) to the south and east of the site, may indicate the presence of a road connecting this area with the village of Palaiochori through the Karaouli ridge. Pottery from the settlement at Aghios Georgios includes a large number of coarse wares and table wares from the Middle Byzantine period, dating up to the 13th century CE¹¹. Similar to the Byzantine settlement in Area c (see below), typical production of plain, glazed, and sgraffito wares is represented, including a well preserved base of green and brown painted ware. Chafing dishes

¹⁰ Orlandos 1939/40, 113–114. The term *paralavrio* is used by Orlandos to describe the dependencies of the Monastery of Osios Meletios. Panaghia, Aghia Paraskevi, and Aghioi Theodoroi are other *paralavria* mentioned in the text.

¹¹ Notes on the pottery from the two Byzantine settlements (here and in Area c) are courtesy of Fotini Kondyli, who studied the material during the field season.



Fig. 4 Aerial photo of Byzantine settlement at Aghios Georgios

and plain-glazed coarse wares are present and also point to a Middle Byzantine era of activity (10th – 12th century). Middle to Late Byzantine strap handles (from cooking pots and jars) are found both here and in the area of the Medieval tower at Kondita in Area c. A particularly interesting find is a stamped body sherd, probably from an amphora or a storage vessel. The stamp in the form of the cross can be seen in examples of Middle Byzantine amphorae and is associated with the transport and selling of agricultural goods, especially wine, oil, and garos¹². It is possible that some activity in the area continues in the Late Byzantine period (13th – 15th century)¹³.

¹² Such a stamp was found in a Middle Byzantine monastery, see H. Evans – W. D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261* (New York 1997) 258 cat. 179.

¹³ J. Vroom, *Byzantine to Modern Pottery in the Aegean: 7th to 20th Century: An Introduction and Field Guide* (Utrecht 2005) 80–81. 110–111. 112–113. 124–125.

Other sites of interest

A second, albeit much smaller, area of interest in Area b is a small concentration of finds in the center of Area b, found in association with a collapsed structure (SU_bo41 and SU_bo42). A pithos fragment, tile fragments (including a Lakonian pan tile), a variety of coarse and fine wares, along with the architectural remains, provide evidence for habitation, but the small scale and range of potential dates in the surface assemblage make it difficult to provide any more precise information at this stage.

The third location of interest is found in the southwestern extremity of the plain, at the debouchment of a small stream originating from the hills of Kokkina Chomata, in an area called Karaiskaki. The more fertile bottom of the valley, hemmed in by limestone hills, was divided by several low terrace walls running north-south. They appear to be connected to several features (F_bo65, F_bo66, F_bo66, F_bo67, and F_bo71) forming a larger complex. Among them was discovered a rectangular enclosure with an internal room (F_bo72), the walls of which are rectilinear and made of limestone blocks. The

pottery from the site includes fine and coarse wares, a pithos rim, and a large amount of glazed tiles. Initial pottery reading suggests a Late Classical to Early Hellenistic date. The overall assemblage of artifacts and features suggests that this was a small farmstead.

Area c

Area c is located immediately north of Oinoe¹⁴, bounded by the east-west modern road crosscutting the Mazi Plain in the south and stretching up to the Monastery of Osios Meletios, the Church of Aghioi Theodoroi, and the Frankish Tower of Kondita, all situated on the southern slopes of Mount Pastra, called *Oros Myoupoleos* in Byzantine times (*fig. 5*)¹⁵. The area is characterized by rolling hills sloping toward the south and separated by narrow V-shaped valleys.

Over the course of the field season 537 units were surveyed in this area, covering 2,3 sq km. Average visibility was 47%, and the average unit size was 0,43 ha. Most of Area c consists of elongated mowed fields or large olive orchards and vineyards. The western half of Area c is the most intensively exploited, although a good portion (c. 30%) of agricultural fields were unused at the time of survey. Some were deliberately fallow, to be sure, but many were clearly left uncultivated for several years. The eastern portion of Area c – the modern *oikismos* of Lefka – is more residential and, as is indicated by the map, a good portion of it was inaccessible to the survey team, due to fences or walls, with vineyards and orchards often walled-in as part of house compounds with several out-buildings.

¹⁴ Fieldwork in Area c was overseen by Sarah Craft.

¹⁵ On the name of the mountain, see Orlandos 1939/40; Tzavella 2012, 153. See also the *Life of Meletios* by Nikolaos Methones: Νικόλαος επίσκοπος Μεθώνης, Βίος τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μελετίου τοῦ ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῆς Μουσιπόλεως ἀσκήσαντος, in: P. S. Speliopoulos (ed.), Συμβολαί εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ μοναχικοῦ βίου ἐν Ἑλλάδι, II. Ὁ Ὅσιος Μελέτιος ‘ὁ νέος’ (περὶ 1035–1105) (Athens 1949) 37–72. Myoupolis (also Nioupolis and Inioupolis) was also the later name of the settlement at ancient Oinoe. On the monastery and churches see Bouras – Boura 2002; Orlandos 1939/40. On the tower see Pantelidou-Alexiadou 1994.

In general, relatively few finds were identified over the majority of the survey area, except in a small number of select areas. While pottery was occasionally collected, tile – both counted and collected – consistently outnumbered diagnostic sherds by a significant ratio.

Prehistoric materials were exceedingly rare in Area c. Isolated lithics were found in only seven survey units, scattered throughout the southern half of this zone (*fig. 3*). The location of two of these survey units near the foot of the pass that enters the Mazi Plain from Panakton is noteworthy; these are located just east of the Mycenaean site found in 2014¹⁶, where further collections in 2015 revealed more Mycenaean kylix stems and feet, as well as an obsidian blade core. Outside of this zone, a single Mycenaean kylix stem was found in SU_c231, just west of the Byzantine settlement at Kondita.

Due east of the Kondita settlement and north of Ancient Oinoe a circular structure, a possible prehistoric tumulus (F_c018), was found on a hill top in the course of extensive survey. This roughly circular stone mound with an internal chamber-like section measures c. 12 m across and bears a strong architectural and topographical resemblance to F_b037, discovered in 2014.

Classical to Roman remains were found in very low densities throughout Area c, usually represented by only a single diagnostic sherd of broad date range. Only one location had a clear concentration of ceramics of these periods, located in the southwest corner of Area c. A variety of pottery and tile were found here, with date ranges mostly from Classical to Late Roman times. No archaeological features were recorded within these high-density survey units, but there is a well at the intersection of modern roads in the southwest corner, which may have evidence of premodern construction below the surface, based on the masonry. One find of particular note from this zone was a part of a terracotta figurine.

A limited concentration of ceramic material was found in the vicinity of a feature complex consisting of a standing building (F_c022) and very large (31 m diameter) threshing floor (F_c023). The rectangular building measures some 26,9 × 6,8 m on a northwest-southeast orien-

¹⁶ Fachard – Knodell – Banou 2015, 182.

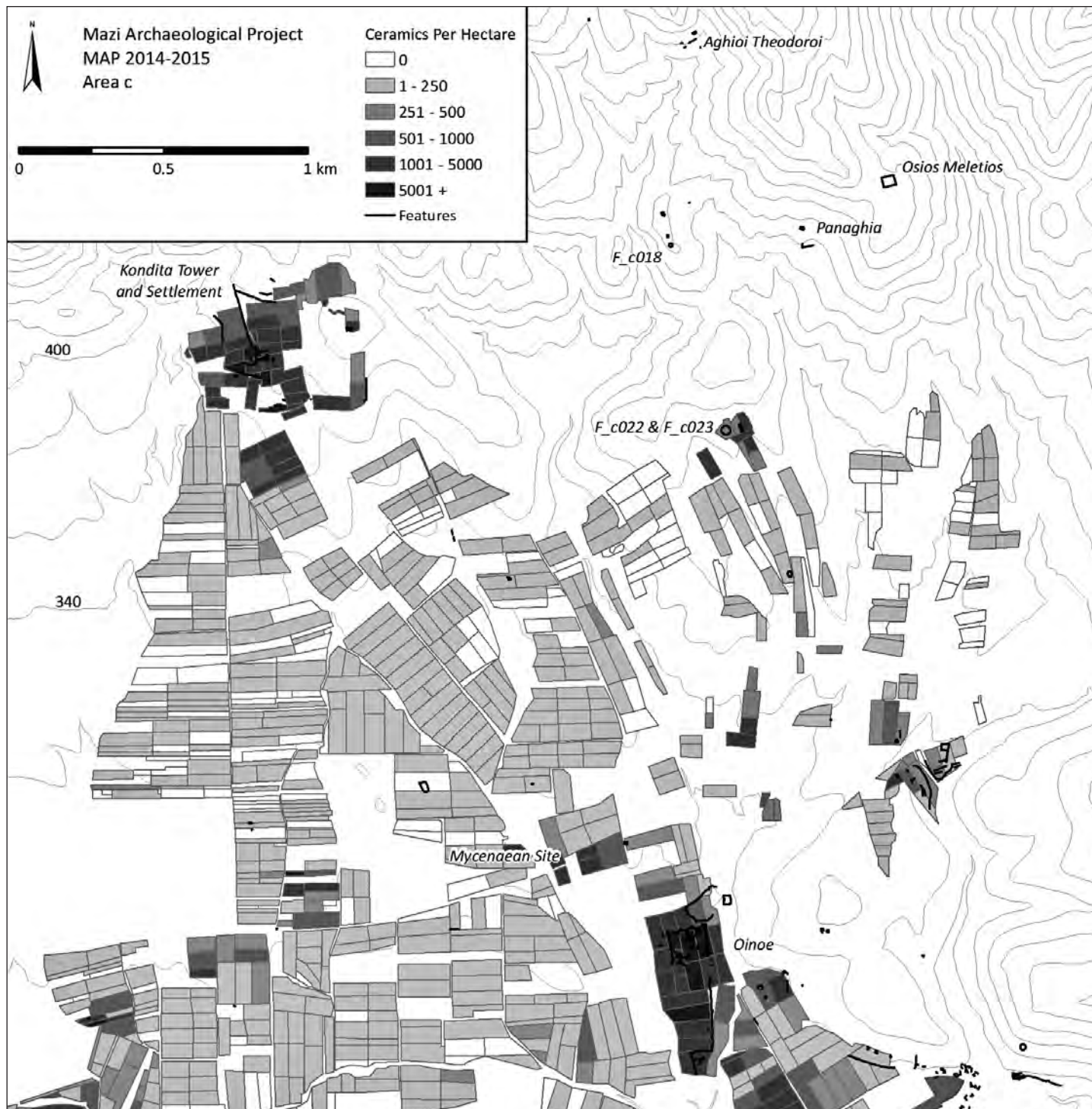


Fig. 5 Map of Area c, indicating ceramic (pottery and tile) densities

tation, and is supported on the exterior by buttresses on each of the longer sides. The interior of the structure is surprisingly well built, consisting of vaulted ceiling supported by arches and pillars from a second phase. The doorframe on the east side of the building appears to have been the main entrance, its arch framed by conchitic

limestone (possibly Megarian) with shell inclusions¹⁷. In recent times this was likely used as a farm, but the architectural features suggest an earlier date, perhaps Ottoman.

¹⁷ On this stone, see Paus. 1, 44, 6–8.

The Byzantine/Frankish settlement and tower at Kondita

Only one part of Area c stood out in terms of a particularly dense and wide distribution of finds: the substantial Byzantine settlement in the vicinity of the Kondita Frankish tower (F_c025)¹⁸, which produced large quantities of Middle and Late Byzantine pottery, including glazed decorated tablewares with well-established chronologies. The location of the site (*fig. 6*), on the northern limits of the plain and significantly above the flatter, agricultural land below, is typical of Byzantine (broadly defined) settlement patterns¹⁹, in contrast to the concentration of Classical and Late Roman settlement at Oinoe to the south. The substantial size of the site is also noteworthy, with a clearly defined ceramic scatter covering an area of some 30 ha (*fig. 5*). The tablewares include bowls, plates, and a few jugs, representative of typical Middle Byzantine production (incised sgraffito, champ-levé, plain-glazed, green- and brown-painted and slip-painted wares). Most finds date from the second half of the 12th to the early 13th century with the exception of the slip painted wares that are a slightly earlier (late 11th – 12th century). A find of particular note is a Middle Byzantine sherd from a fine orange-red burnished jug that dates to the 10th – 11th century. The dates of the pottery suggest activity in the area before the arrival of the Franks, who came after the Conquest of Constantinople in 1204. However, another bowl belonging to the Zeuxippus subtype dating to the 13th – 14th century points to the continuation of activities in the Late Byzantine period and corresponds with the tower's Frankish phase. Excavations carried out in 1994 revealed the remains of a building some 70 m west of the tower, with pottery ranging in date from the 13th century to the Ottoman period²⁰. The significant number of tablewares in the area suggests the presence of a settlement, also attested by vessels for food

production, including a Middle Byzantine chafing dish and numerous handles of cooking pots and water jars dating to the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. Equally interesting is the large number of storage vessels, including jars and pithoi, that point to intense agricultural activities in this period. Some of these handles have a striking fabric with many grey, white and red inclusions and schist. The same fabric has been noted in body sherds and rims of coarse wares. The settlement at Kondita appears to be the largest Middle Byzantine and Frankish settlement of the Mazi Plain.

The monastery of Osios Meletios

The most important landmark in the Byzantine landscape of the Mazi Plain is the Monastery of Osios Meletios, founded by the renowned Cappadocian monk Meletios²¹. It was established by the 11th century and went through several phases of occupation, remaining an important hub of monastic life on the border between Attica and Boeotia. The Monastery was situated along one of the main roads between Athens and Thebes, which ascended to the Portes Pass and continued toward Pyli. Osios Meletios was said to control 24 *paralavria*²², of which only some are known today. Thanks to a chryso-bull of ca. 1084 by Alexios I Komnenos, a considerable amount of the taxes of Attica was yielded to the Monastery²³. The earliest remains on the site, visible in the refectory, appear to date to the Late Roman period. Fragmentary inscriptions were seen in the refectory by Milchhoefer and Orlandos, including the funerary stele of a citizen from the Attic deme of Melite.²⁴ Leake reports the “remains of Hellenic walls indicative of an ancient site” below the Monastery and associated them with the

¹⁸ On the tower, see Pantelidou-Alexiadou 1994.

¹⁹ J. Bintliff, *Reconstructing the Byzantine Countryside: New Approaches from Landscape Archaeology*. *Byzanz als Raum* 2000, 37–67; J. Bintliff, *The Complete Archaeology of Greece: From Hunter-Gatherers to the 20th Century AD* (Malden 2012) 419–423.

²⁰ Pantelidou-Alexiadou 1994.

²¹ Orlandos 1939/40; C. Vanderheyde, *La sculpture architecturale du Katholikon d'Hosios Meletios et l'émergence d'un style nouveau au début du XII^e siècle*, *Byzantion* 64, 1994, 391–407; Tzavella 2012, 156–158; H. Deliyanni-Doris, *Die Wandmalereien der Lite der Klosterkirche von Hosios Meletios* (Munich 1975).

²² Bouras – Boura 2002, 237–240.

²³ Tzavella 2012, 158.

²⁴ The stone was first seen by A. Milchhoefer, *Antikenbericht aus Attika*, *AM* 12, 1887, 330 n° 494; Orlandos 1939/40, 64.



Fig. 6 Aerial photo of Frankish tower and settlement at Kondita

ancient place-name of Melainai, although a location in the Oinoe region has been challenged by Lambert²⁵. Others have reported ancient remains near the monastery as well, but in very vague terms²⁶. While we did no field-work inside the Monastery this season, extensive survey was conducted immediately to the south, around the *paralavrio* of Panaghia, a small single-aisled church with protruding apse, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary²⁷. Besides terrace walls and tile fragments south

of the Monastery, no trace of ancient remains were found in this sector, occupied by orchards surrounded by thick forest. A second *paralavrio*, known as Aghioi Theodoroi, is located c. 500 m west of the Monastery of Osios Meletios²⁸, recently restored thanks to a grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation²⁹. Built in the 12th century, its plan is cross in square (2 columns, 2 pillars) with a narthex. Several terrace walls, likely built in association with the church, are found in the vicinity, as well as a handful of other structural remains. Surface pottery from the area is not earlier than the Byzantine period. In addition to extensive survey and architectural documentation, we produced a full photogrammetric model of the church of

²⁵ W. M. Leake, *The Topography of Athens and the Demi*, 2. *The Demi of Attica* (London 1841) 132. Melainai is a well-known place-name in Classical times, connected with the legend of Melanthes (Hdt. 5, 65, 3; *Hellanikos* F23) and associated with a disputed territory between Boeotia and Attica. However, this *kome* might have been wrongly located in this area, see S. D. Lambert, *Rationes Centesimarum: Sales of Public Land in Lykourgan Athens* (Amsterdam 1997) 196.

²⁶ Edmonson 1966, 142–144; L. Chandler, *The North-West Frontier of Attica*, *JHS* 46, 1926, 8.

²⁷ Orlandos 1939/40, 107–108; Bouras – Boura 2002, 240.

²⁸ Orlandos 1939/40, 108–112; Bouras – Boura 2002, 239–240; J. Koder – F. Hild, *Hellas und Thessalia, Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 1 (Wien 1976) 217–218.

²⁹ <http://www.snf.org/en/grants/grantees/h/holy-monastery-of-ossios-meletios/renovations/>.

Aghioi Theodoroi, with the dual purpose of benefiting both research and conservation efforts in the area³⁰.

Area c appears to have been the most densely occupied area of the Mazi Plain in the Byzantine period, with a major settlement and tower at Kondita, as well as one of the most important monastic centers of Attica and Boeotia at Osios Meletios. Beyond the Byzantine period, and outside of the aforementioned sites of particular significance, evidence of settlement remains very thin, generally following the pattern seen elsewhere – particular nodes of concentrated material in certain locations, mostly around the edges of the plain, with occasional concentrations along major axes of communication.

Area e

Area e, dominated by the site of Eleutherai, covers the western part of the Mazi Plain (*fig. 7*)³¹. This sub-region is marked by the junction of two important streams, one running south from the Kaza Pass, the other running east from the Villia Valley through the fields south of Prophitis Ilias. Near the confluence of these we discovered a large prehistoric site at Kato Kastanava, from which the Mazi stream continues all the way to the eastern end of the plain. East of the Kaza stream, Area e is characterized by large grain fields similar to the ones found in the eastern part of the plain. The current land-use in the Prophitis Ilias Valley, however, is dramatically different. The soil is much less fertile and adapted to grain, but well supports vine and olive cultivation, which are the most common crops in the valley (the area is known as the vineyards of Prophitis Ilias, a monastery on the north side of the valley). The field system is also different, with small fields divided by narrow rubble walls and low terraces, reflecting a different type of land ownership and property transmission than in the Mazi Plain proper.

This different land-use pattern is reflected in the sizes of the survey units, which are very much fragmented in the Prophitis Ilias Valley, averaging 0,32 ha, compared

with the Area e average of 0,41 and the overall average of 0,43. Visibility was also typically lower in this zone (20–30%), especially when compared to the 60% average of the grain fields situated in the eastern section of Area e. Pottery and tile densities throughout the area are not high, with the exception of Eleutherai and its outskirts, but are generally higher than in Areas b and c (*fig. 7*). This seems to suggest a highly nucleated settlement pattern around Eleutherai, and agricultural exploitation of certain parts of the plain leaving few traces. Lithics densities were notably higher than in the other areas, which can be explained by the presence of a major prehistoric site in this area.

Extensive and intensive survey in Area e yielded several exciting results. Besides the discovery of the prehistoric site at Kato Kastanava, the Eleutherai fortress and settlement were systematically explored, and the surface of a karstic depression was thoroughly examined, yielding enormous quantities of fine pottery – this is likely the “Cave of Antiope” mentioned by Pausanias³².

Prehistoric settlement at Kato Kastanava

A large prehistoric site was discovered in the south-eastern part of Area e, adjacent to several fields that yielded higher-than-average lithic densities. The site was discovered during extensive survey, following a forest fire that exposed the ground surface previously obscured by thick maquis (*fig. 8*). The site consists of various stone walls and structures, including several large stone enclosures. Gridded collection was conducted around features F_e086, F_e087, and F_e088, in which a team conducted a vacuum collection in 20 × 20 m units, with the exception of the well-articulated interior of feature F_e087, which was collected separately (*figs. 3. 9*). To the south, the interior of a large enclosure (F_e155) yielded the highest concentration of artifacts, although the gridded collection that was possible in 2015 extended only part way into it. In total, the gridded survey collected 241 chipped stone artifacts and 426 pieces of pottery in 42 survey units. The lithic assemblage was mostly obsid-

³⁰ Model by Sarah Murray, visible at <http://www.maziplain.org/media>.

³¹ Fieldwork in Area e was supervised by Marc Duret.

³² Paus. 1, 38, 9.

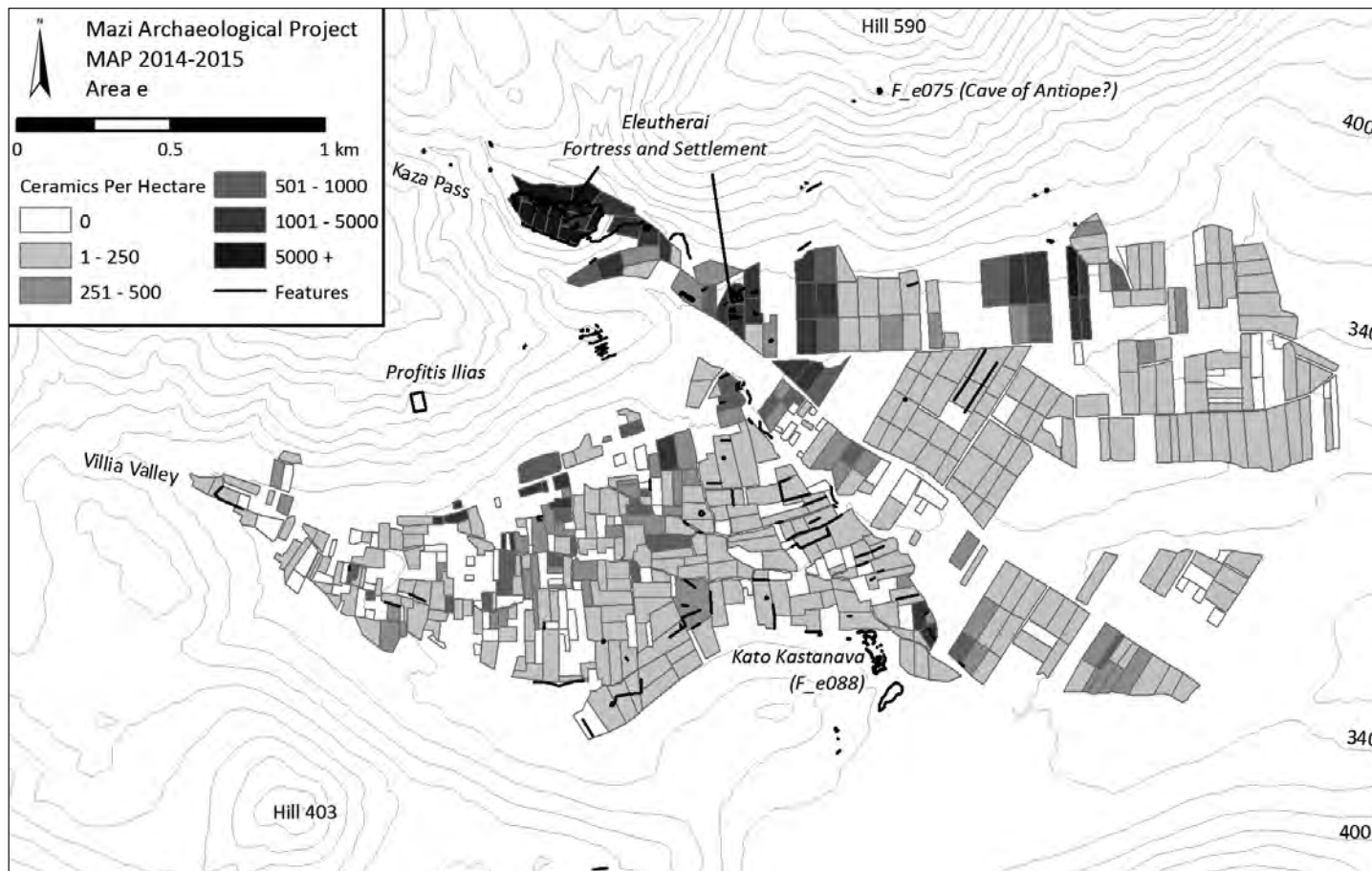


Fig. 7 Map of Area e, indicating ceramic (pottery and tile) densities

ian, but chert artifacts occurred much more frequently than at F_2017, where gridded collection was conducted in 2014 (fig. 3)³³. Informal exploration revealed the likelihood that this scatter, like the associated architecture, extends at least 100–200 meters farther to the south, and also to the west, where a large amount of lithic material was observed.

Preliminary study of the pottery suggested that this material ranges in date from prehistoric to Roman³⁴. While much of the material is heavily degraded and exact dates are not possible to determine, the majority of the pottery appears to be prehistoric. There is an apparent Early Helladic I presence and a significant amount of material which may be earlier; there is not, however, anything clearly diagnostic of Early Helladic II date. This pattern is comparable to that observed in the neighboring Skourta Plain, where M. and M. L. Munn observed con-

tinuity from Final Neolithic to Early Helladic I, but nothing from Early Helladic II. They point out that this pattern stands in contrast to the substantial expansion of settlement in this period elsewhere, and suggest that the emergence of major centers elsewhere in Attica and Boeotia may have polarized the settlement pattern, leaving this mountainous place largely abandoned³⁵.

Considering the relative rarity of non-prehistoric artifacts found in the gridded collection and in the overall area, it is probable that most of the remains observed do indeed constitute an extensive prehistoric settlement. The large number of lithics collected and the surface pottery suggest the presence of a large site of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date. In our present state of knowledge, the site at Kato Kastanava is the first substantial prehistoric settlement known in the Mazi Plain. Future efforts here will focus on detailed architectural documentation and the determination and mapping of the full extent of surface features and artifacts.

³³ Lithic artifacts await further study by J. F. Cherry in 2016.

³⁴ T. Krapf provided a preliminary study of the pottery, with special attention to prehistoric and possible prehistoric sherds. Further, more formal study is of course forthcoming.

³⁵ Munn – Munn 1990, 33–41.



Fig. 8 Aerial photo of Kato Kastanava

Eleutherai town

In Classical and Roman times, the main hub of settlement in the western part of the Mazi Plain was Eleutherai, located at the mouth of the Kaza defile, east of the hill occupied by the well-known fortress of the same name (*fig. 10*)³⁶. The settlement has been known since the early 20th century, when Stikas excavated at the site³⁷. The main discovery of the excavations was a 16,55 × 8,76 m euthynteria with a section of a crepis, oriented east-west. The building was identified as the temple of Dionysos Eleuthereus mentioned by Pausanias in his description of Attica³⁸. The temple, belonging to the Doric order, was

dated by Stikas to the 4th century BCE. Pausanias states that the cult statue of Dionysos Eleuthereus was transferred to Athens, although the date of this event is not known³⁹. In 2015, we were able to uncover and clean the foundations of the temple. In the process, pottery and especially architectural tiles belonging to the temple were discovered, showing several phases of rebuilding⁴⁰. Detailed photogrammetric documentation and new findings will be used in a systematic restudy of the chronology and architecture of the temple.

³⁶ For a summary on the settlement and fortress, see Fachard 2013.

³⁷ E. G. Stikas, *Ανασκαφή Ελευθερών*, Praktika 1939, 44–52.

³⁸ Paus. 1, 38, 8.

³⁹ Paus. 1, 38, 8: *ἐν τούτῳ τῇ πεδίῳ ναός ἐστι Διονύσου, καὶ τὸ ξόανον ἐντεῦθεν Ἀθηναίοις ἐκομίσθη τὸ ἀρχαῖον: τὸ δὲ ἐν Ἐλευθεραῖς τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἐς μίμησιν ἐκείνου πεποιήται*. For a discussion of this passage and a summary of the opposing views, see Fachard 2013, 84–85.

⁴⁰ Philip Sapirstein provided some observations concerning the tiles.

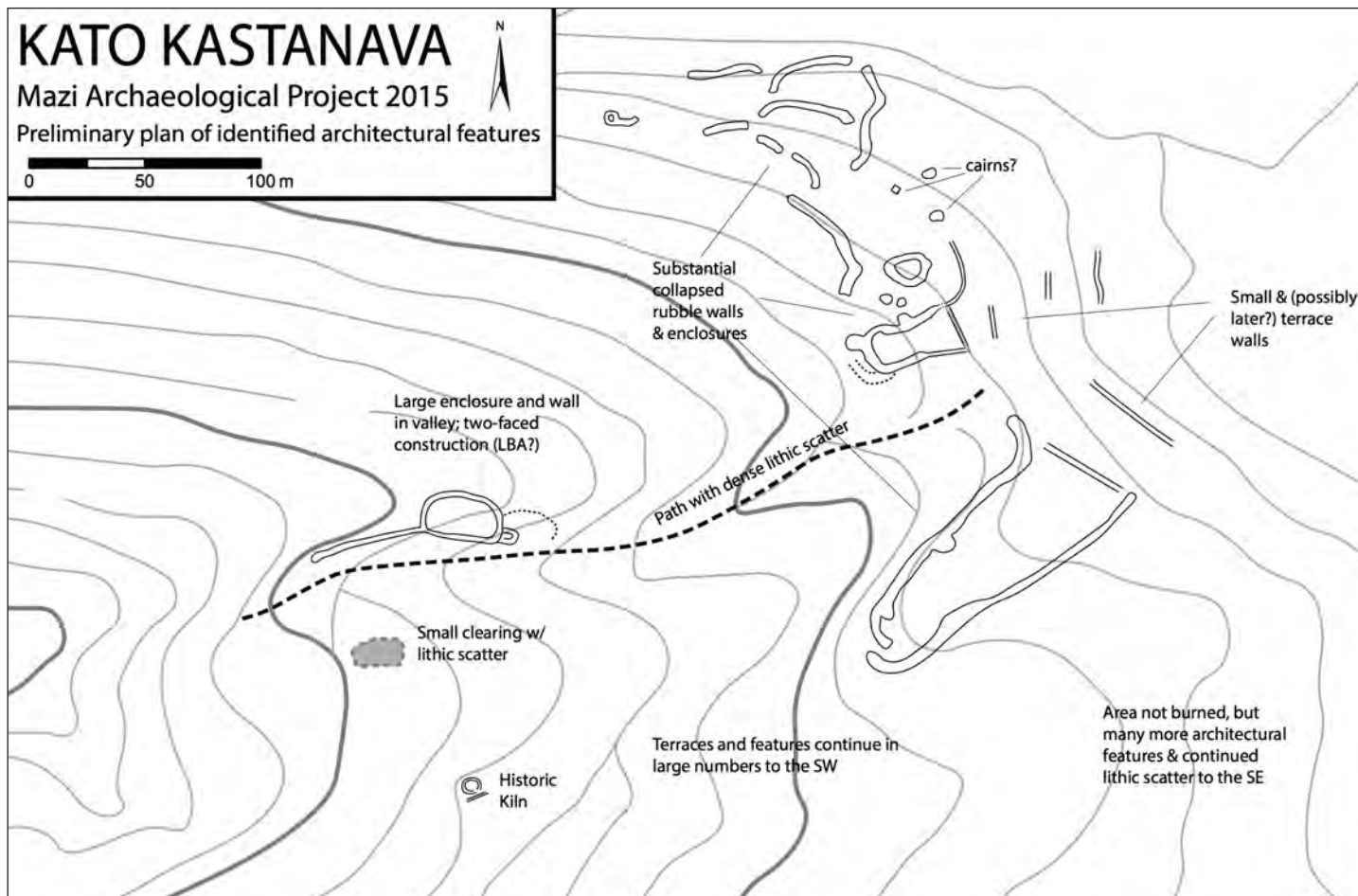


Fig. 9 Site plan of Kato Kastanava

Intensive survey of the site and surrounding fields yielded densities of pottery and tile among the highest in Area e. We recorded two zones with very high densities (fig. 7): a first nucleus of 2 ha around the main settlement (the temple and associated areas), and a second one of 3,8 ha, 120 m to the east. If the gap between these zones, which we were not able to survey in 2015, was part of the settlement, then the total size would be around 8,5 ha, not counting the area between the settlement and the fortress, or the fortress itself. We also recorded a high-density scatter of 1,8 ha some 260 m northwest of the temple, on the slopes of the fortress hill in the vicinity of two basilicas also excavated by Stikas. Our impression is that Eleutherai should be understood as a proper “town” rather than a village, where the pottery indicates habitation from the Classical to the Late Roman period⁴¹.

⁴¹ On the ASCSA sherd collection from Gythokastro and Eleutherai, see Ober 1987, 213–215. A late fifth-century inscribed fragment of Boeotian *kantharos* suggests the presence of a shrine dedicated to Herakles: see W. Hornbostel, *Jahrbuch des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg* 3, 1984, 176–179; J. M. Camp, *Notes on the Towns and Borders of Classical Boeotia*, *AJA* 95, 1991, 200; H. W. Pleket – R. S. Stroud, *Eleutherai. Dedications to Herakles, ca. 425–400 B.C.*, *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* 35 (Leyden 1985) 8–9 no 36.

Of all the towns and places in the Attic-Boeotian borderlands, Eleutherai has the richest literary and mythological past. According to a tradition recounted by Euripides in the *Suppliant Women*, Theseus buried the common soldiers of the Seven Against Thebes “by the shady rock of Eleutherai” on his way back to Eleusis after his victorious battle at the gates of Thebes⁴². Plutarch writes that “the graves of the soldiers could be seen at Eleutherai, and those of the leaders near Eleusis”⁴³. Eleutherai is also the setting of Euripides’ now lost *Antiope*, and is the legendary birthplace of the twins Amphion and Zeathos, sons of Antiope (daughter of Asopos) and Zeus.

⁴² Eur. *Suppl.* 754–59.

⁴³ Plut. *Theseus* 29.

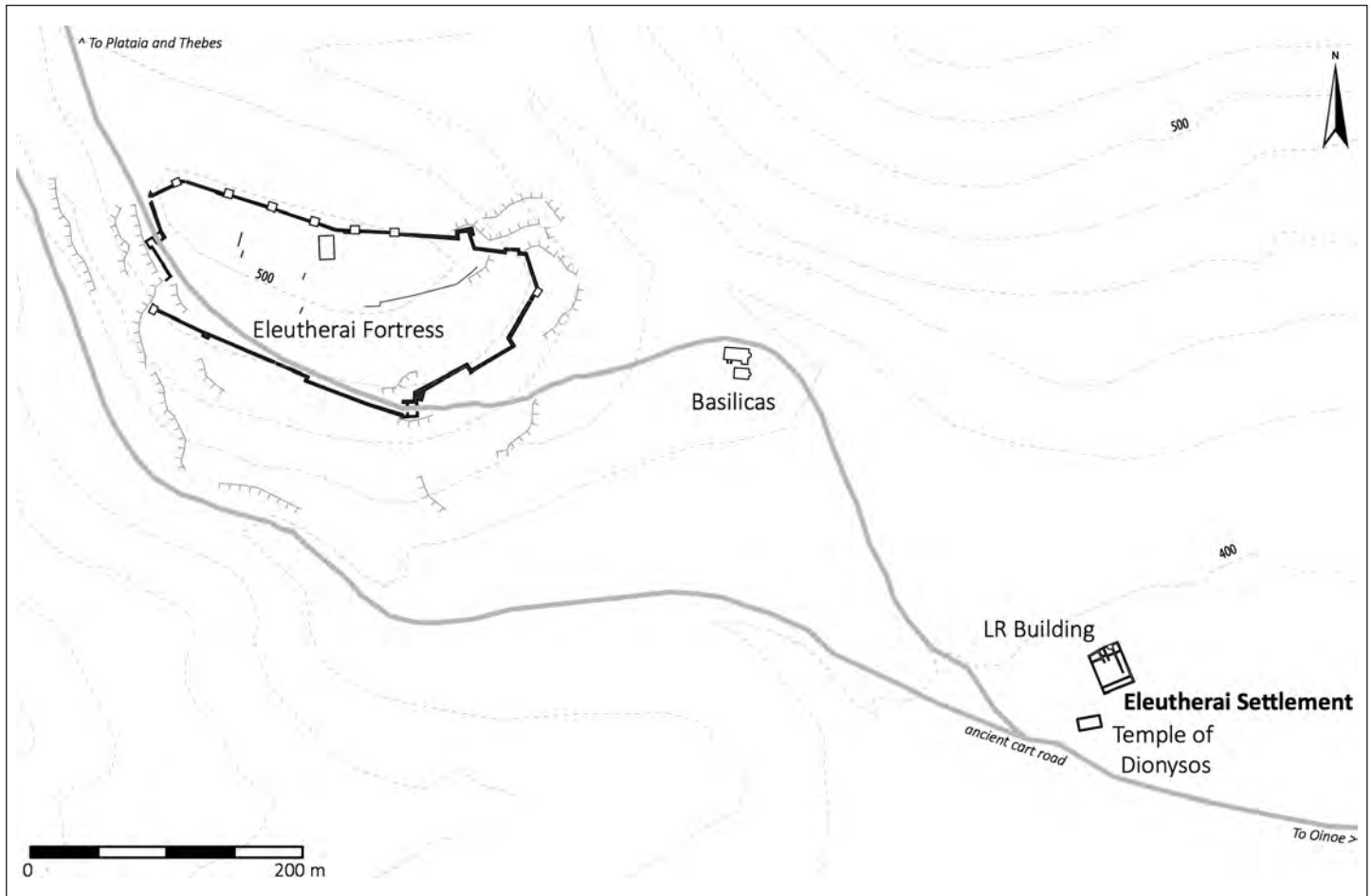


Fig. 10 Area plan of Eleutherai fortress and settlement

Antiope's cave

In the vicinity of the settlement, Pausanias mentions the existence of a small cave, where Antiope gave birth to Amphion and Zeathos; the twins were spotted by shepherds, who bathed them in a nearby spring⁴⁴. The two brothers are mentioned by Homer in the *Odyssey* as the first builders of the walls of Thebes⁴⁵. The legend of Antiope giving birth at Eleutherai is cited by Apollodoros, who specifies that the town was in Boeotia, one of vari-

⁴⁴ Paus. 1, 38, 9: ἀπωτέρω δὲ ὀλίγον σπήλαιον ἐστὶν οὐ μέγα, καὶ παρ' αὐτὸ ὕδατος πηγή ψυχροῦ: λέγεται δὲ ἐξ μὲν τὸ σπήλαιον ὡς Ἀντιόπη τεκοῦσα κατάθειτο ἐς αὐτὸ τοὺς παῖδας, περὶ δὲ τῆς πηγῆς τὸν ποιμένα εὐρόντα τοὺς παῖδας ἐνταῦθα σφᾶς λοῦσαι πρῶτον ἀπολύσαντα τῶν σαργάνων. «A little farther on is a small cave, and beside it is a spring of cold water. The legend about the cave is that Antiope after her labour placed her babies into it; as to the spring, it is said that the shepherd who found the babies washed them there for the first time, taking off their swaddling clothes.» (Translation: W. H. S. Jones [The Loeb Classical Library, London 1926–1935]).

⁴⁵ Hom. Od. 11, 260–265.

ous instances in which the two brothers and their mother are connected to Boeotian cult and myth⁴⁶.

A cave was discovered near Eleutherai by Stikas in 1940 and interpreted by him as the cave of Antiope mentioned by Pausanias⁴⁷. Although some doubts remain concerning its exact location, we believe that Stikas refers to the limestone depression located some 750 m north-east of Eleutherai, on the steep slopes of Mount Pastra, below the summit of Hill 590⁴⁸. According to Stikas, however, the cave is located west of Eleutherai, information which does not concur with the position of this cave. Nevertheless, we believe Stikas was mistaken either in his identification or his reporting, due to the location and assemblage we identified in 2015. Despite the depreda-

⁴⁶ Apollod. 3, 5, 5: ἡ δὲ ἀγομένη δύο γεννᾶ παῖδας ἐν Ἐλευθεραῖς τῆς Βοιωτίας. S. Larson, Boeotia, Athens, the Peisistratids, and the *Odyssey's* Catalogue of Heroines, Trends in Classics 6, 2014, 415–416.

⁴⁷ E. Stikas, Ανασκαφή ἐν Ἐλευθεραῖς, Praktika 1940, 16–17.

⁴⁸ Surprisingly, the cave is not mentioned by Edmonson 1966, who seems to have missed Stikas' report. The cave is reported by Munn – Munn 1990, 36.

tions of illegal excavations, we recorded a very rich surface assemblage of pottery and metals, including small fragments of decorated Bronze sheets. The chronology of the pottery stretches from Archaic to Roman, although the Archaic and Classical periods are predominant⁴⁹. One of the most striking features of the pottery assemblage is the large amount of Archaic Corinthian *aryballoi*. Also noteworthy are three sherds bearing a graffito⁵⁰. Overall, the assemblage is almost exclusively fine wares. At this stage the finds from F_eo75 are best interpreted as offerings deposited in the context of cult activity. The identification of this feature with the cave of Antiope thus remains a plausible hypothesis. Situated just below a rocky crag marking a prominent feature in the landscape, the cave is easily visible from the Temple of Dionysos, from which the location was likely pointed out to Pausanias while visiting the town.

Eleutherai fortress

New work at the fortress of Eleutherai followed two main axes of investigation. First, the entire surface of the fortification, as well as the north and eastern slopes, were intensively surveyed (*fig. 7*). Several features were discovered during intensive and extensive survey, including ancient walls, remains of roadways, traces of quarrying, small rubble constructions and terraces, and WWII machine gun nests (*fig. 10*)⁵¹. The survey also revealed the highest densities of pottery and tiles in Area e. This mate-

rial appears to be associated with the ancient buildings located on the elongated summit plateau, as well as the towers, which the copious tile finds confirm were roofed⁵². Among the pottery, a Mycenaean kylix stem indicates at least limited Bronze Age activity on the fortress hill. This evidence is not isolated – two Mycenaean tombs were excavated by the Ephorate on the southwest slopes of the hill⁵³. Initial analysis suggests that the majority of the pottery belongs to the Early Classical (second half of the 5th century) to Early Hellenistic periods (3rd century), with signs of Late Roman occupation as well⁵⁴. A stamped black-glazed sherd discovered on the north slope of the fortress deserves special mention. The die-stamp depicts a bearded man looking to the right, a figure found on Boeotian coinage⁵⁵. The stamp may indicate an official vessel for measuring liquids during transactions and sales. It is obviously too early to interpret the significance of this find, but it may signify the presence of Theban/Boeotian officials or the existence of official transactions being carried out at the site in the late 5th – early 4th century BCE⁵⁶.

The entire fortress and its immediate surroundings were mapped with DGPS and drone photography (*fig. 11*), and 3D photogrammetric models were produced for the west and northwest curtains and towers. In parallel, a systematic program of reconnaissance was conducted, which produced significant results. Several stretches of a road leading to the fortress from the settlement of Eleutherai were discovered, entering the fortress through the “Oinoe Gate” and continuing west to the “Plataia Gate” (*fig. 10*). Wheel ruts were spotted in the

⁴⁹ We thank J. K. Papadopoulos for reviewing this material with us.

⁵⁰ eo75_133, part of an horizontal rim:]IO:BYK[INHΣ] (Archaic); eo75_137, body of an open shape vessel:]OIO (unknown date); eo75_135, upper part of a globular unguentarium: Θ[. We are grateful to T. Theurillat for his help.

⁵¹ The machine gun nests, made of low, semi-circular rubble walls, were identified based on an abundance of German cartridge shells. Some of them may result from the final stand of E.L.A.S. (the Greek People’s Liberation Army, Ελληνικός Λαϊκός Απελευθερωτικός Στρατός) in January, 1945 (see: Works of Art in Greece, the Greek Islands and the Dodecanese. Losses and Survivals in the War, London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1946). The monument on the hilltop across the pass from Eleutherai commemorates a battle that took place on August 13, 1943.

⁵² Much of the material found on the north slopes must result from the destruction of the tower’s roofs, but also from cleaning operations conducted from Antiquity to Early Modern times.

⁵³ E. Baziotopoulou-Valavani, *ADelt* 40, 1985, 46. We are indebted to E. Svana for this reference.

⁵⁴ This confirms the picture given by Ober 1987, 213–214. The pottery from the 2015 season is under study. Dates are provisional.

⁵⁵ The closest parallels are the late 5th century (ca. 426–395) emissions from Thebes, displaying a head of a bearded Dionysos looking to the right and the Boeotian shield on the obverse (BMC 74–75 n° 54–63 and pl. 13, 5–9).

⁵⁶ See also Fachard 2013, 103–105.

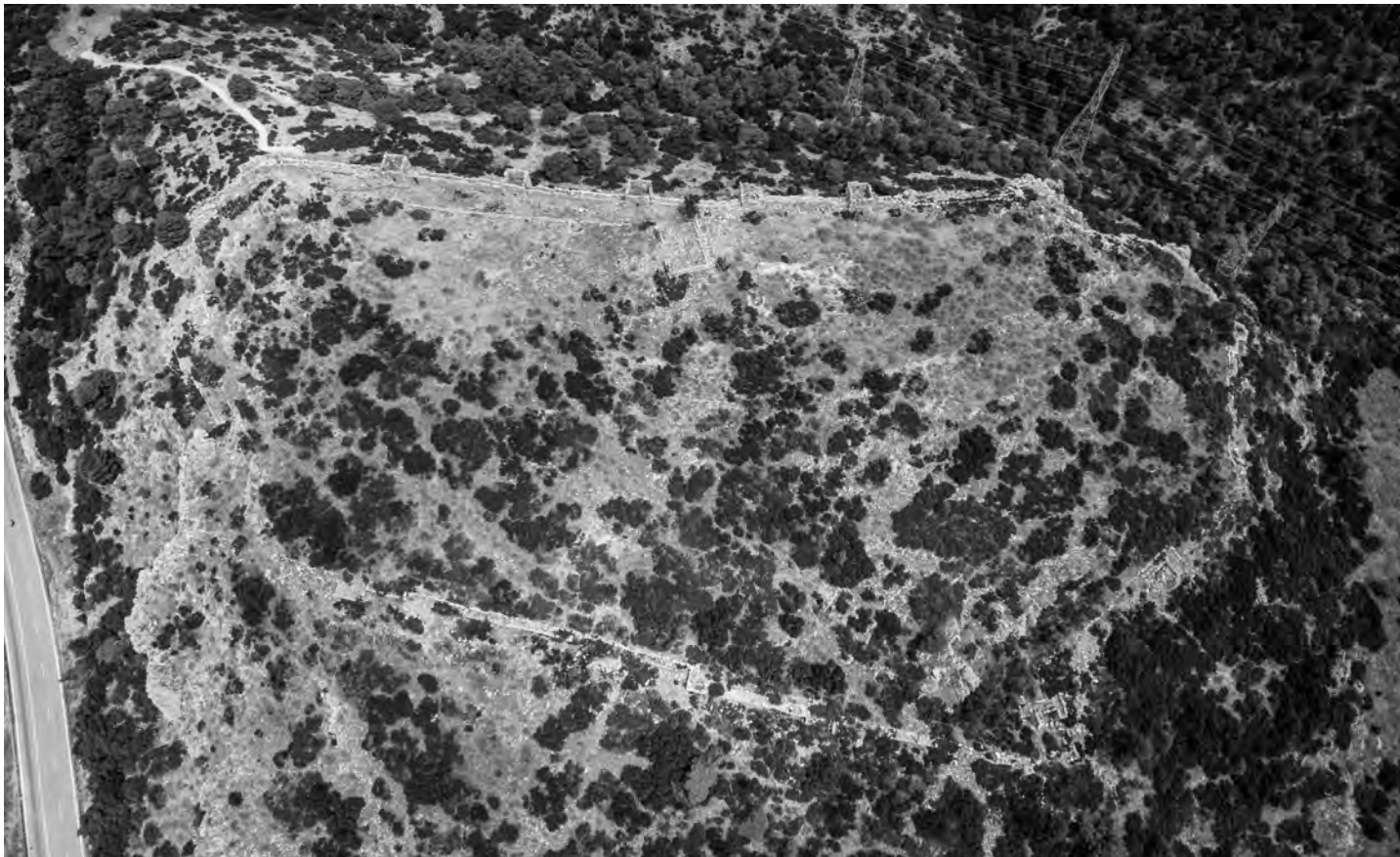


Fig. 11 Aerial photo of Eleutherai fortress

bedrock for the first time, confirming that the road was indeed carriageable and that cart traffic could cross the fortress⁵⁷. Several architectural elements, including new stretches of polygonal walls *intra muros*, indicate the existence of a first building phase that preceded the construction of the larger 4th-century fortress. Heretofore unreported, this appears to be a major breakthrough in the understanding of the site.

Finally, new photogrammetric documentation and analysis of the inscription at the “Plataia Gate” shed substantial new light on its content and context⁵⁸. Three-dimensional modeling and radiance scaling revealed certain differences in letters from Beschi’s reading⁵⁹, and more detailed study is already yielding new insights concerning movement of goods and border taxes entering Boeotia.

⁵⁷ On the existence of this road, see Ober 1988, 213; Fachard 2013.

⁵⁸ Photogrammetric modeling was done by Evan Levine with photos taken by Sarah Murray. Nikolaos Papazarkadas has provided a preliminary reading and interpretation, and will oversee the formal study of the inscription.

⁵⁹ Beschi 1968; see also Fachard 2013.

Geological studies

Geological studies in the Mazi Plain continued in 2015, after the preparation of a detailed geological map in 2014. Fieldwork this year came in two forms: cores drilled near Ancient Oinoe and a soil profile study of several locations throughout the Mazi Plain.

Two boreholes were drilled on the east side of the Mazi Plain, in the framework of the larger geomorphological and environmental study of the region⁶⁰. The first core was drilled in the Lower Town of Ancient Oinoe, while the second was strategically positioned east of the Stanes Pepas settlement, where the main streams of the Mazi Plain make their junction and form the Eleusinian Saratapotamos. The second core, with a depth of 3,1 m, reached palaeosols from the Pleistocene; samples were collected for pollen analysis.

Detailed descriptions of soil profiles were undertaken in seven exposed locations throughout the survey area, mostly along stream beds; these yielded two primary

⁶⁰ This study is under the supervision of Prof. Kosmas Pavlopoulos and Dr. Dimitris Vandarakis.

observations⁶¹. First, many of the soils clearly have alluvial parent material, partly the result of most of the profiles being located along stream beds. One located on the border between Areas a and c featured at least fourteen different layers of fluvial deposits. This suggests that the stream currently east of this location formerly flowed through this area with force, drastic enough to deposit cobbles up to 10 cm in diameter in locations very far away from current stream channels. Second, the soils of the region are well weathered, indicated by the prominent presence of clay minerals in the soils. Further study will explore how these and other observed soil characteristics may have impacted human occupation and archaeological surface assemblages in the Mazi Plain.

Future plans and priorities

Future field seasons will have four general priorities: completing the intensive survey of the plain (chiefly in Area d), continuing intensive survey west and north of the Eleutherai fortress, carrying out further extensive exploration of the edges of the plain, and initiating more intensive architectural and collection-based investigations at locations of particular interest.

Further exploration, gridded collection, and architectural documentation are necessary at the prehistoric site at Kato Kastanava. This should include DGPS mapping of the entire site and a detailed architectural study of building phasing across the site. Rescue excavations may be necessary at some point in the future, given the high-risk location and the fact that the site has already been damaged by fire. We also plan to do more work at the Eleutherai fortress and in its immediate surroundings, in order to complete a detailed architectural plan and further study of certain features of particular interest.

Several areas of interest merit sub-surface investigations in the form of archaeological geophysics. Locations of particular interest for this type of subsurface investigations are the prehistoric site at Kato Kastanava, the lower town of Ancient Oinoe, the Mycenaean site north of

Oinoe, the Byzantine settlements in Areas b and c, and the fortress and settlement of Eleutherai.

Finally, we aim to expand our study of the more recent past and contemporary landscape of the Mazi Plain. The communities in and surrounding the Mazi Plain have rich recent histories that merit further research. Ethnographic work on the local history of the area and attitudes to the archaeological record are an ongoing priority for MAP. Up to this point we have collected limited archaeological data on the distribution of modern material culture (*fig. 12*), which must be complemented by a study of local land-use, demography, and modern history⁶².

Diachronic observations and conclusions

The 2015 season has confirmed the richness of the Mazi Plain as a landscape intensively occupied and exploited since prehistory. The prehistoric site at Kato Kastanava, covering several hectares, appears to be the primary permanent settlement of the Mazi Plain in the Early Bronze Age (and was probably occupied earlier as well). Its importance and extent are still largely unknown, but no other site of this size has been recorded in the near vicinity. Further work would greatly enhance our knowledge of the main occupational phases of the site. The absence of Middle Helladic material throughout the plain is noteworthy, but in the Late Helladic period, the presence of a Mycenaean settlement northwest of Oinoe seems likely, given the finds in the area from 2014 and 2015, while limited discoveries at Eleutherai and Kondita may reveal a more extensive occupation and exploitation of the plain.

After the Mycenaean period, we encounter an occupational hiatus in the Mazi Plain. Confidently-dated Geometric pottery is still absent from our survey collection, and the only clearly Archaic pottery comes from the so-called cave of Antiope (late 7th to early 6th century). This Archaic material from the cave is surprisingly abundant, given the virtual absence from the nearby settlement of Eleutherai. However, the town is mentioned

⁶¹ This work was done by Elizabeth R. Davis.

⁶² See, for example, recent ethnographic work at Villia (Oikonomou 2007).

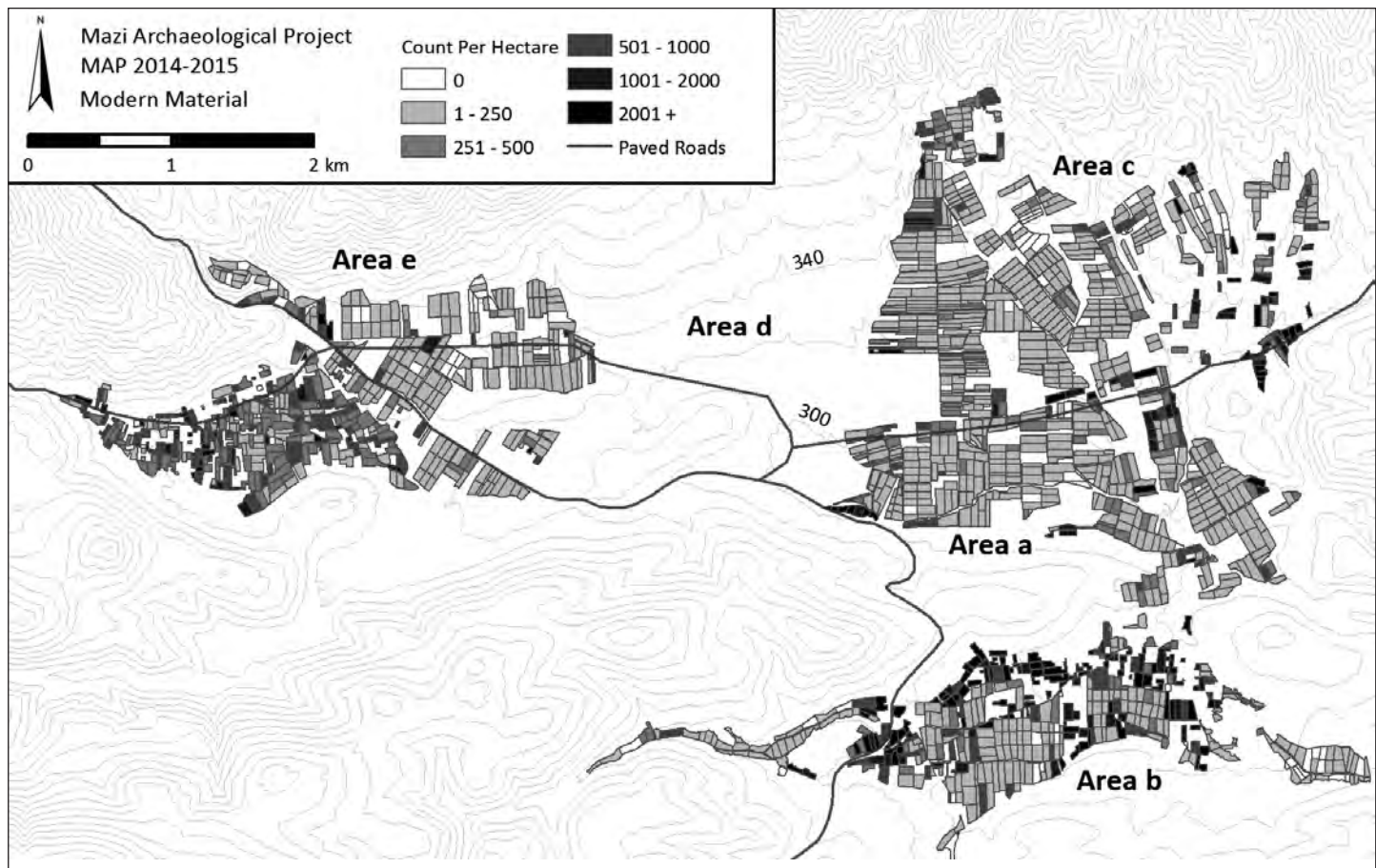


Fig. 12 Distribution of modern material culture in the survey area

alongside Thebes in a late 6th century border conflict with the Megarians, attesting to an earlier occupation⁶³. From the Classical period onwards, the town of Eleutherai is the first hub of settlement in the western part of the plain. Based on surface densities, the town seems larger than Oinoe. Unlike Oinoe, however, the Eleutherai settlement does not ever seem to have been walled. Of course, some 500 m to the west, the Eleutherai fortress was well defended and could easily have served as a refuge for the town's population. The massive fortifications visible today were built in the 4th century, partially reusing older walls. The new circuit, enclosing 3 ha, extended low enough to the east to include a cistern and we have now confirmed that it was connected to the town by a carriageable road. At this time, there were one or two branches of the Oinoe-Thebes road, one through the fortress, which could exercise a strict control over travelers and goods travelling to Boeotia, and perhaps one

below the fortress to the south (subsequently reused by the 19th century "Royal Road" and the modern one). The inscription on the "Plataia Gate" likely reflects this control, and the aforementioned stamp could attest to the presence of Boeotian officials at the fortress. This and previously noted evidence suggest Boeotian control of Eleutherai in the late 5th, 4th and 3rd centuries BCE⁶⁴.

Starting in the 2nd century BCE, signs of occupation are scarcer to find throughout the Mazi plain. It is too early to suggest a Late Hellenistic abandonment, but based on surface ceramics, activity appears to be dramatically reduced in the following three centuries. Such low visibility is contrasted by the dense occupation witnessed throughout the plain in the Late Roman period, when every main hub of settlement was occupied. The walls at Oinoe were rebuilt at this time, and new rectangular buildings using ancient blocks were added against the northern curtains. The occupation extended (again) to the lower town, and defensive walls were (re)erected using ancient building material. At the Eleutherai fortress,

⁶³ A. P. Matthaiou, *Bronze Tablets from Thebes: Preliminary Notes*, in: N. Papazarkadas (ed.), *The Epigraphy and History of Boeotia: New Finds, New Prospects* (Leiden 2014) 213–215.

⁶⁴ See also Fachard 2013.

similar rectangular constructions made of ancient blocks were added to the north curtain. Such actions may reflect a climate of insecurity in the area. Considering the location of the Mazi Plain on the main routes between Northern Greece, Attica and the Peloponnese, it may have suffered from invasions taking place throughout central Greece at this time.

In the 11th century, the Monastery of Osios Meletios became one of the major monastic centers of Central Greece. Positioned between two of the most important cities (Athens and Thebes) in the Hellas Thema, its influence reorganized communication routes through the mountains, promoting in particular the route through Pyli and the Portes pass, dotted with *paralavria* belonging to the Monastery. By the 12th century, the settlement pattern in the Mazi Plain had changed dramatically. The historical settlements of Eleutherai and Oinoe had seemingly been abandoned for a long time. The main hub of settlement was the plateau of Kondita, located higher on the hills of Mount Pastra, dominating the plain from above while being safely hidden from the road in the plain. As the site of a substantial tower, well provisioned with water, the Kondita settlement would remain occupied until the Late Byzantine/Frankish period. A contemporary settlement is found at Aghios Georgios, another *paralavrio* of Osios Meletios, on a route to Paleochori, Mandra, Eleusis, and the southern Megarid via the Kantili pass.

The arrival of the Arvanites populations in this region is dated to the 15th century. Villages in the area were known as the Dervenochoria and were granted some level of autonomy during the Turkish occupation⁶⁵. Villia, founded in the 16th century, was part of the Megala Dervenia, communities which controlled the passage between central Greece and the Peloponnese, a strategic role they kept until the War of Independence – yet another example of the long-term significance of this region as a crossroads and borderland⁶⁶.

Overall, areas surveyed in 2015 reveal patterns of settlement similar to those observed in 2014 in Area a, in which there are significant, well-defined concentrations of artifactual material in the vicinity of major sites and features, mostly around the edges of the plain, with relatively low background scatter elsewhere. In sum, our results have expanded substantially our knowledge of the long-term history of the Mazi Plain, as well as the larger intersection of Attica, Boeotia, and the Megarid. Findings from 2015 complement well the predominantly Classical and Roman materials documented in 2014, revealing substantial settlements of the prehistoric and Byzantine periods, as well as the extent and diachronic nature of the landscape surrounding the well-known site of Eleutherai. Future work will complete the field survey of the plain and provide the opportunity for much needed further exploration and study of the sites, features, and artifacts that comprise an increasingly exciting, diachronic archaeological record.

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⁶⁵ K. Biris, Αρβανίτες, οι Δωριείς του Νεώτερου Ελληνισμού (Athens 1960) 214–218.

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Maps and plans by the authors unless otherwise indicated.