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Survey at a complex urban site

By John Bintliff, Emeri Farinetti, Božidar Slapšak and Anthony Snodgrass



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with contributions from
Philip Bes, Margherita Bonanno Aravantinos, Oliver Dickinson, Lorenzo Gentili, Catherine Grandjean, Machiel Kiel, Uroš Kirn, Chrystalla Loizou, Christel Müller, Robin Osborne, Jerome Poblome, Kalliope Sarri, Vladimir Stissi and Athanasios Vionis

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5. Pottery catalogue to accompany Chapter 12
6. Catalogue of Byzantine to Early Modern pottery to accompany Chapter 13

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7. Table of artefact density and visibility measurements for Thespiai City (Ch.3b)

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Chapter 3(a)

Interpreting the density and period map series: methodology

Introduction: the site in its setting

It is appropriate to begin with relevant aspects of the physical geography of the landscape in the environs of the city of Thespiai (Fig. 3.1), so we here offer a brief overview of the geology, geomorphology and topography of this small district in south-western Boeotia.

If the central and western regions of the province of Boeotia are dominated by high crystalline limestone mountains, and their ancient erosion products compressed into flysch rocks, the eastern are more typically composed of plateaux and rolling low hill-land of Tertiary-Pleistocene marine and freshwater sediments, separated by valleys and a few plains filled with alluvial-colluvial (slope-wash) deposits. Thespiai lies at the western border of the eastern landscape type, and within a few kilometres the Valley of the Muses leads into the heart of the Helikon limestone massif, the start of the western landscapes. Fig. 3.1, taken looking in a north-westerly direction, illustrates this well: in the middle distance to the right of the image, steep cliffs in Tertiary-Pleistocene conglomerates lead up to an extensive plateau of softer sediments in the same geological series, a continuation of the eastern Boeotian landscape of hill and plateaux which runs from here eastwards, through Thebes, to Tanagra in the borderlands of Attica. In the foreground, the road running up towards the camera will lead on to a matching plateau of similar geology: this forms the landscape studied in our previous monograph, the inner southern hinterland of ancient Thespiai. To the far left, the outlying peaks of the predominantly Mesozoic hard limestone massif of Mt. Helikon rise in waves with a westerly trend, separated by folds of softer flysch sediments. In mid-photo, a wide valley separates the two Tertiary-Pleistocene low uplands and in that sector, immediately below the modern villages of Thespies and its close neighbour Leondari lies the extensive predecessor town of Thespiai, the city of Greco-Roman antiquity. The village seen perched on the cliff edge is modern Thespies (previously Erimokastro), whilst modern Leondari village (formerly Kaskaveli), is just out of view on the next hill-top to the right. In the following image (Fig. 3.2) this eastern neighbour, Leondari, can be seen, separated from Thespies only by a deep valley cutting into the plateau.

The geological map of south-western Boeotia (Fig. 3.4, digitized by Emeri Farinetti), marks the city survey grid in yellow. River and major colluvial (slope-wash) deposits are pink, hard limestones are light to dark grey and orange, their associated mountain flysch rocks are purple, whilst the Tertiary-Pleistocene marine and freshwater series are in a light green hue. Piedmont slope-wash is shown in light blue colour.

At first sight the lowland which we saw in the first photo, stretching from west to east between the two north and south plateaux and the heights of Mt. Helikon further west (Fig. 3.3), would give the impression of having been created by a major river emanating from Mt. Helikon to its west. The geological map could give the same impression, with a pink alluvial strip, if of very narrow proportions, running from the Valley of the Muses through the city site and the River Kanavaris depression, then north-eastwards into the Theban Plain. But although the chief perennial stream of this whole district does indeed drain eastwards from the Valley of the Muses (the closest part of the Helikon range) and is today called the River Askris, it makes an abrupt diversion, almost a reversal of its course, to the south-west, to occupy a river-valley on the far side of the southerly plateau (whose survey was covered in our previous monograph, *Testing the Hinterland*), thus by-passing the city site altogether. Instead, the drainage of the city site is in fact carried



Figure 3.1. *The site of ancient Thespiai (the green area of cultivation in the middle distance), seen from the south-east, with the village of modern Thespies on the ridge beyond it.*



Figure 3.2. *View across the ancient city, eastern sector, into the Kanavaris valley, with the village of Leondari on the plateau edge behind.*



Figure 3.3. *Archival image of field teams in 1985 counting sherd density in the alluvial valley of the Kanavaris, just north-east of the Magoula (shown in middle distance).*

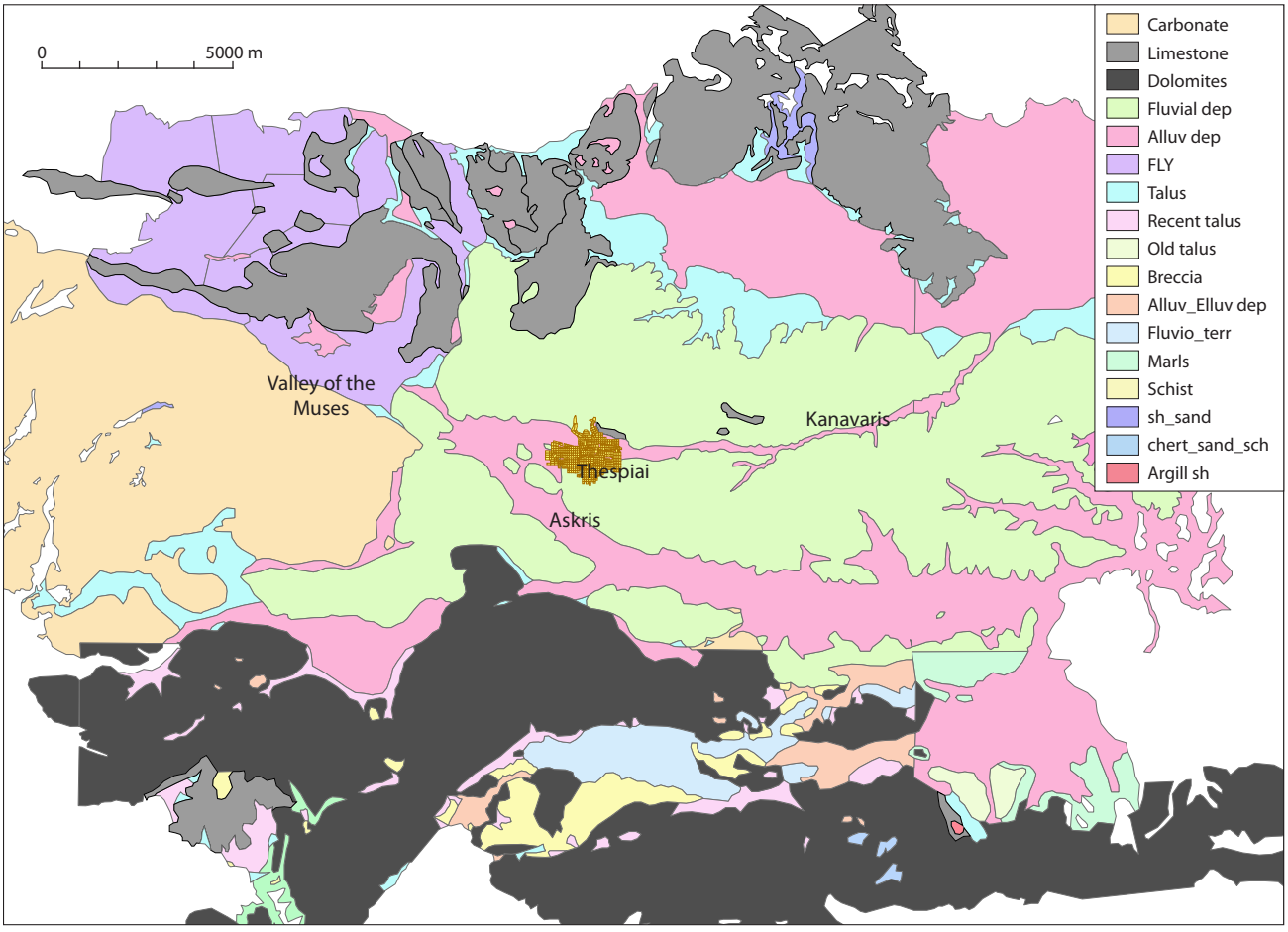


Figure 3.4. *(above) Geological map of south-western Boeotia.*

out by a stream of tiny proportions (Fig. 3.5), the Kanavaris, which actually rises within the area of the ancient city, below modern Thespies village, and flows eastwards into the Plain of Thebes. It has however been suggested that, in remote geological time, the Askris did indeed once discharge eastwards down the Kanavaris valley, but was redirected by tectonic activity into an opposing, more southerly course. This accounts for the divergent paths of the alluvia on the geology map (Fig. 3.4), as well as the continuous alluvial expanse also shown on this map, connecting the small alluvial Kanavaris and the much larger Askris valleys. Even today, when one stands at the city site and looks westwards, no clear change in elevation marks the nearer plain drained eastwards by the Kanavaris and the further, western plain drained by the Askris. The next two photographs (Figs. 3.6 and 3.7) show this imperceptible watershed from a point east of the diverted Askris and west of the springs of the Kanavaris.



Figure 3.5. *The tiny dimensions of the Kanavaris stream near its sources within the ancient city locality.*



Figure 3.6. *(above) The watershed between the Askris and Kanavaris drainages, facing eastwards toward Thespies village.*



Figure 3.7. *(right) The view from the same point as Fig. 3.6 but facing westwards toward Helikon.*

The original core area of the ancient city occupies an extensive zone south of the Kanavaris stream, ascending gently from its lower valley floor through a small plateau, on which lies the *Kastro* (earthwork traces of the Late Roman fortification), to the rising slopes which will reach the higher, soft-rock plateau to the south. It soon became clear during our surface survey that the town did not reach this higher plateau. North of the river, the city survey ran to the steep cliffs underlying the high plateau to the north and up the two deep valleys which punctuate its rim, to the west of the village of Thespies, and between Thespies and its eastern neighbour Leondari. Conditions for survey in and around Thespies village were naturally very difficult, and a rapid perusal of visible soil areas between and around the houses did not reveal significant evidence for occupation of this hilltop location, although the customary continuous scatter of 'off-site' Classical tile and sherds was met with, as in all areas within several kilometres' radius of the ancient city. Intensive survey in the northern zone beyond the Kanavaris was also hindered by the clear evidence of considerable hillwash or colluvium below the cliffs, concealing surface finds. Nevertheless, large areas of this sector were still available for extending the survey grid, and here the evidence suggested that the zone north of the river was only periodically a focus for settlement, more commonly acting as a burial zone for the main settlement south of the river. As we shall see, the recent work by the Ljubljana team has added nuances of detail to this conclusion, but not to the overall picture.

The oldest urban community, in Archaic to early Classical times, appears to have been confined to the areas lying south of the Kanavaris stream. This rivulet arises beside the city, from underground springs: hence its shallow valley will always have been much as today, with no possibility of high floods threatening the adjacent town (unpublished research by Dr. Renato Sabatini, Rome). In its original extent, therefore, the ancient city had a low-lying topography, abundantly supplied with fresh water, yet not at risk from river flooding. What it lacked, however, was a strong position, defensible against external enemies. In this respect it resembles other Greco-Roman towns we have studied such as Tanagra, Haliartos or the lower town at Hyettos (and its neighbour Orchomenos, under study by the German Institute at Athens). Not surprisingly, the Classical sources record several conquests of Thespiai, the repeated demolition of its city walls and, most tellingly, of the recourse by its citizens to another place in its territory, *Keressos,* which was a more secure refuge in such times and an obstacle to enemy cavalry access. We are increasingly confident that Keressos lay just a few kilometres away, in sight of the ancient city, on the ridge-top of the rugged Pyrgaki hill on the north side of the Valley of the

Muses, where a large fortification has been revealed after a total burning of the hill by a great fire in the summer of 2007.

Choosing the methodology of the Thespiai city survey

In 1982 we had conducted the first surface survey on one of our urban sites, the village or second-order settlement of Askra in the Valley of the Muses. In 1985 we carried out further detailed surface collection at Askra, before undertaking the survey of the genuine cities of Haliartos and Thespiai, completed in 1986. In terms of discovery, the exact location of Askra was uncertain and was found through standard rural field-walking, as a large settlement (*c*. 11 ha) in the centre of its enclosed valley, without parallel in the entire district. Haliartos was a long-identified rocky hill on the edge of its modern successor town. Thespiai was known to lie in the extensive fertile valley and hill-land south of the modern village which now takes its name from it, but its extent and the exact location of its nucleus were unknown.

The first task, then, before applying an urban survey strategy at Thespiai was to identify a location likely to be in the heart of the ancient town, from whence an expanding grid of surface recording could search for the maximal boundaries of the city. The western European Travellers of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 2) had observed a series of ruined churches, of indeterminate age, a Late Antique irregular fortification, the *Kastro*, and the final occupational period of an Early Modern village (sometimes referred to as *Lefka*) at the ancient site. In the final years of the nineteenth century, the *Kastro* fortification was dismantled by Jamot, a French epigraphist, in order to extract the numerous inscribed blocks which had been used in its construction as *spolia* recycled from older buildings and cemeteries.

Although the *Kastro* was no longer an obvious feature on the ground, inspection of a recent air photograph (Fig. 3.8) soon revealed its location. The wall



Figure 3.8. *In this aerial photograph, the Late Antique* Kastro *fortification is recognisable as a small anomalous polygonal field boundary, circled, directly south of the village of Thespies, the more westerly of the two villages shown.*



Figure 3.9. *The western edge of the* Kastro *is still marked by a low curving bank.*

had been reduced to a low bank (Fig. 3.9), but the rural farm tracks in this area retained their former respect for its earlier height and, in contrast with the straighter tracks elsewhere, encircled a striking polygonal block of fields. On the ground, stretches still containing jumbled architectural blocks could be located, and the whole circuit was subsequently easily recognized (Figs. 3.10–3.12).

At this first stage of our survey planning, it was still entirely unclear how large the city itself might have been, since the *Kastro*, at no more than 12 ha, was obviously in the nature of a 'fort' which, on analogy with similar Late Roman enclosures elsewhere, would have contained on a permanent basis the ecclesiastical and military authorities in charge of the town, and acted as a temporary refuge for the surrounding populace in this time of large-scale insecurity. But at least this gave the urban survey a clear focus within the city, from which the town's borders could be probed. In actuality, the field teams observed very substantial density differences in the surrounding landscape, with an apparent increasing fall-off as one moved outwards from the *Kastro* in all directions. It was therefore decided to estimate where the density



Figure 3.10. *Spolia in the southern wall's construction debris.*



Figure 3.11. *The* Kastro *earthwork, middle distance, running east–west; seen from the north.*



Figure 3.12. *View of the ancient city site from the modern village of Thespies, looking south, with the* Kastro *outlined in red and the Kanavaris river marked by arrows.*

decline was most dramatic and where densities typical for the open countryside were reached, using previous field-walking north and west of the city as a guide, and so to define the outer edges of the city survey grid.

Starting well to the east of the *Kastro* with our first survey units, in what were likely to have been extramural open fields, and moving in towards the *Kastro*, we hoped to be able to detect a threshold of higher values of surface sherds marking the maximal borders of the town proper. In the summer of 1985 therefore (Fig. 3.13), the field teams opened up a series of grid units well to the east, at a point where it seemed that 'non-site' levels were characteristic. The deep north–south block thus created was the springboard for a westward expansion of the survey grid, extended progressively towards the *Kastro* and passing into the built-up area, aiming for what proved to be the densest surface debris in the interior of the *Kastro*.

By the end of the 1985 season the eastern half of the town's expanse had been gridded, as well as the *Kastro* itself. Moreover, in order to test whether the city had extended across the small Kanavaris stream which divides the central *Kastro* sector from the hills to the north, most of the trans-Kanavaris fields had also been surveyed, up to the foot of the steep cliffs on which the modern villages of Thespies and Leondari perch.

In 1986 the urban survey was completed with a roughly equal area of transects placed mainly to the western side of the *Kastro*, extending to sectors where 'off-site' or 'extramural' levels of sherd densities became characteristic. The grid had thus been extended to the east, west, south and north, until the field teams considered that 'off-site' densities had become typical, maintaining the process until supposedly rural areas were reached. This was to allow the definition of the town's edge to be analysed from the urban survey itself. Problems were encountered in the north, however. Here it was observed that considerable slope-wash from the steep slopes below the modern villages concealed large areas of the surface archaeology, so that pre-Modern activities in this zone were often obscured. Although transects were carried up the two side valleys running around the hill of modern Thespies village, little material was visible here either; nor did a rapid search of the hill-slopes themselves reveal such density of finds as to suggest that the city had run up on to the area of contemporary Thespies village. A prominent recess in the hill-side between these two side valleys was also transected (shown as a protuberance between the two 'horns' of valley survey in the preceding figure), but once more vegetation and hill-wash produced no significant artefactual material.

One location within the ancient site, apart from the *Kastro* which had been all but demolished by Jamot, had been not only known, but visited almost annually in the decades before our survey. Just north-east from the *Kastro*, a low hillock fronts directly on to the flat small alluvial valley of the Kanavaris river – the Thespiai *Magoula* (Figs. 3.14–3.16). Its remarkably rich Neolithic ceramic finds had led to regular visits by researchers from the foreign Schools in Greece. George Bass, on leave from the Korean War, even recorded figurines found during these visits (Bass 1959). Owing to the special character and form of the hillock (which is actually a low natural hill with a rich top layer of Neolithic occupation), we decided to treat this as a separate survey locality, and made collections of finds both from the hill as a whole and from its western and eastern halves separately. In the chronological maps for the city, we have displayed the finds from the Magoula hillock proper as an inset box, to make their origin clear.

During the gridding of the city site, observations were made regarding architectural pieces (Fig. 3.17) and the condition of the surface sherds. In later years the whole area was revisited several times over by Anthony Snodgrass and John Bintliff, to record the fragments of structures that were of architectural or other significance, with detailed mapping and a photographic record. These visits were used as the basis for the more thorough inspection of the central areas by an Italian architectural team in 2002–2003, and for the more widespread recording carried out most recently (up to 2008) by the Ljubljana team, one of whose main goals was the discovery of traces of the ancient city walls, *in situ* or removed elsewhere. Limited tests using geophysics were made by Chris Gaffney and Carl Heron, on standing Late Antique ruins in the eastern city; and soil chemical analysis was completed by Professor Brian Davies (Bradford University) on the *Kastro* and areas immediately outside it (Fig. 3.18). These scientific investigations will be summarized later in this volume.

In 1982, when Askra served as our first 'urban' survey project, no Aegean examples existed as possible models for the appropriate methodology. Therefore, as with our rural survey methods, we studied older large-site models from American projects. The best-known of these was the monumental survey of the unparalleled 'megalopolis' of Teotihuacan in Mexico, carried out by R. Millon and R. Whallon in the 1960s (cf. Millon 1964). This had created an overall grid of the city, with detailed surface artefact counts and collection complemented by precise recording of standing architecture.

As noted in the preceding Boeotia monograph (*Testing the Hinterland*), we had already learned from

practical experiment over the first three years of the Boeotia Project that sampling approaches to surface sites, based on spot circles or skeletal strips, were unreliable for obtaining representative finds (cf. Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985). The solution chosen by 1981 was one of contiguous grid units, generally 30 by 10 m in size and subdivided into 4 one-person blocs of 7.5 by 10 m: this had proven effective for small as well as larger rural sites of up to 1 or 2 ha or more, such as villas, but would have been too time-consuming to apply as a uniform system to the study of urban sites (which we later came to define as around 10 ha and over – cf. Bintliff 1997).

The 'village-town' site of Askra was naturally subdivided by field-walls into a series of large fields, so for our first urban study there in 1982 it was decided to use each field as a sampling zone. Then, to provide a control on the possible problems of using units of such variable size to collect sherds from, a more elaborate further analysis of the site was undertaken in 1985. Most fields were now given a 'standard' 30 by 10 m micro-sample block placed inside each, giving us two windows of very different scale into each sector of the ancient site. Since in general, both here and at later urban sites where we repeated this approach of using a larger and a smaller, 'nested' sample, similar amounts of finds were kept from the two sizes of unit, we believed that we could fruitfully compare the results of the different sampling scales to test for contrasts in the periods represented.

In 1985, immediately after the improved Askra survey, we modified this method at Haliartos and then at Thespiai, by attempting to make the larger units regular in size wherever feasible. These were now preferentially set at the size normal for our rural field-walking, 60 by 50 m, which we termed 'Transects'. The 'nested' small units of 30 by 10 m, placed within the Transects and now termed 'Samples', remained at their former size. The intention was to make the study unit as far as possible comparable from one urban site to another. The use of these two size units also made possible a direct comparison with our rural survey data, since the urban Transects were of the same size as our typical rural field-walking units, while the urban Samples were similarly of the standard size for the gridding of rural sites.

As noted earlier, we had no idea at this stage as to how large Thespiai would prove to be, and were more than surprised at the number of Transects required to reach what the field teams considered to be the ancient open countryside on all sides of the settlement. In total, 606 units were to be recorded at the Transect, large-scale level, which served as the basic mapping unit for the city. (On the grid map Fig. 3.13, only this level of study is displayed). The numbered Transects come to slightly less than this total, since by mistake five Transects were covered twice (see again Fig. 3.15): in the north, Trs. 2027 and 2086 and, in the north-west, the following pairs were duplicates: 104/2135, 105/2134, 106/2133 and 107/2130. As it happens, these unintentional overlaps were to prove a source of real insight when we came to analyse the city data in later years: significant differences in the method of survey of the same blocks of land have revealed invaluable experimental information on survey techniques, to be presented later in this chapter.

The precise mode of field operation within the city grids was as follows. For the larger, Transect units, the modal size aimed at was 60 by 50 m. First, we had found in previous rural field-walking that this was of a size to allow a reasonable speed of movement without sacrificing local variations in find density recording; secondly, it was small enough to avoid the risk of team members losing their sense of direction (in the 1980s, still determined by compass, combined with fixed points locatable on the 1:5,000 Greek Army Geographical Service maps). The dimensions were set by a typical team of four students spaced 15 m apart (4 x 15 = 60 m-wide transects), walking a stretch of 50 m (the Transect length), usually running N–S unless local conditions called for E–W or non-cardinal alternatives. A fifth member, the supervisor, marked out the Transect and entered the grid details into field-books, as well as drawing the grid unit on to copies of the 1/5000 map. The supervisor measured, by pacing, any variation in the Transect's dimensions from the ideal size, and noted unusual topographic or land-use details, architectural finds, as well as aspects of content and condition of the surface ceramic scatters.

Although in our first publications we had suggested that the width of field of vision of the field-walkers was 5 m, subsequent experience has led us to reduce this to a more realistic 2 m. This was the basis that we employed for the purposes of calculation in our first Boeotia volume. Each walker in the line counted the density of the scatter in his/her field of vision by using a manual 'clicker'; then, while these values were being collected by the supervisor at the end of the typical 50 m-long Transect, the team-members were asked to estimate the average visibility of the soil they had traversed, on a scale of 1 to 10. The supervisor, a staff member with considerable field-survey experience, compared the different figures with the visible local conditions, if necessary modifying student estimates. A standard 60 x 50 m Transect would therefore yield four density counts,

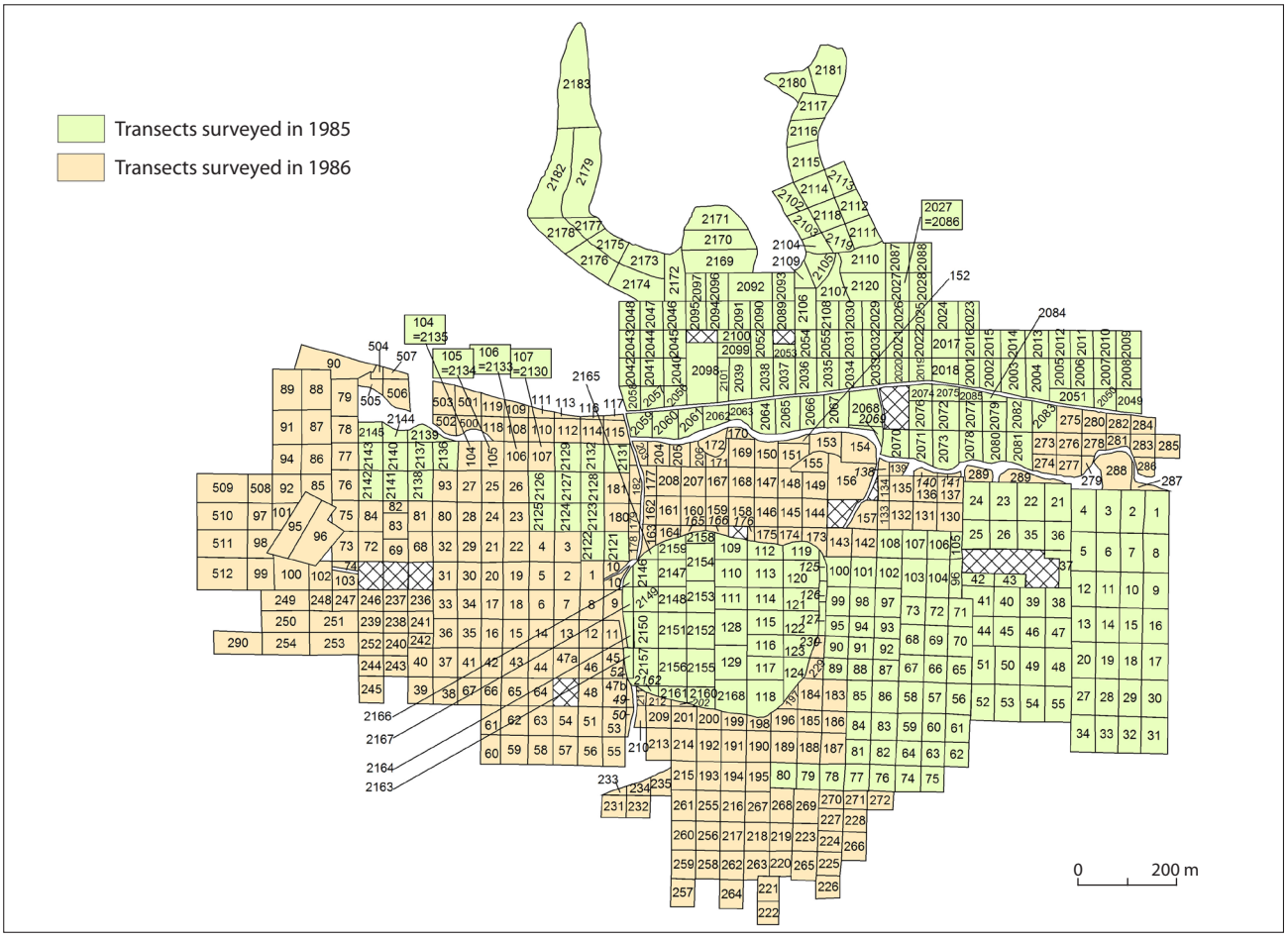


Figure 3.13. *The progression of the Thespiai city survey. The two summer seasons are differentiated by colour, while the (discontinuous) grid numbers indicate the order in which successive units were studied. The* Kastro *is marked by an irregular polygonal shape in the grid's centre, north of which can be made out the path of the Kanavaris stream (GIS by Emeri Farinetti).*



Figure 3.14. *View of the Magoula from the east.*



Figure 3.15. *The city site seen from modern Thespies village, looking south-east. The Magoula hill is outlined in red, the river Kanavaris marked by arrows.*



Figure 3.16. *Thespiai Magoula: oblique aerial photograph taken from the east, showing its location relative to the* Kastro *(just to its left) and the twin modern villages (right) (courtesy Darya Grosman).*



Figure 3.17. *Coffered roof fragments from a major structure west of the* Kastro, *at the time of discovery (archival image from the 1980s).*



Figure 3.18. *Professor Brian Davies taking soil samples for trace element chemical analysis (archival image from the 1980s).*

which could be combined as follows to obtain a density for the whole transect in counts per hectare:

Each of four walkers saw 50 by 2 m, to give a total of 400 sq. m. of each grid. Their counts were modified by the visibility correction (for example, a soil visibility set at 5, that is 50 per cent, would cause counts to be doubled). The total for 400 sq. m. would then be multiplied by 25 to create a count per hectare, visibility-corrected.

Sometimes a large uniform field, or the availability of extra field-walkers, allowed wider Transects, which were extended normally in units of 15 m; likewise smaller units could be covered with fewer walkers. Very rarely, local conditions reduced the team to one walker traversing a field.

Once the Transect density had been read, a collection of sherds for the whole unit was made by all the team combined, wandering over its entire surface. This followed our demonstration from earlier seasons that sherd collections from a small percentage of the surface of a unit suffered from systematic under-representation of certain periods (Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985). It remained true that our density-counts were still made on a limited basis, being confined to just over 13 per cent of the Transect's area. A total count of each unit, however, would not only have been too time-consuming, but also very difficult to accomplish without risk of double-counting through overlapping walking-swathes on a large area. A degree of control could be exercised through the total counting that we carried out in the smaller, 'nested' Sample units across the site; as we shall see later, the density maps of the city from the two recording systems turned out to be almost identical at the overall level of the site.

As noted, these smaller units were based on the standard rectangular units that we had deployed for smaller, rural sites since 1982. The Sample was usually 30 by 10 m, subdivided into four one-person blocks of 10 by 7.5 m dimensions. One person counted the total density for each of the four sub-units, but the collected sherds from all four were then amalgamated, owing to the difficulty of bagging and documenting so many small collections. As with the Transects, local conditions or the availability of students sometimes led to Samples consisting of less or more than four sub-units: the rectangle was then diminished or enlarged in person-units of 10 by 7.5 m.

Whilst the 'model' study unit at Thespiai was the Transect of set size, and its nested Sample also with a determined size, it proved impossible to implement this across the entire area of almost 2 sq. km (180 ha) surveyed in the city grid. First, since almost the whole area was under continuous cultivation, practical difficulties could limit the ideal grid scheme. In high summer, crops sensitive to heavy student boots, such as the delicate cotton plant, meant

that some areas could only be entered by a single team-leader for a limited transect or, if the relevant farmer was present, not entered at all. High stands of maize might make normal transecting impossible, and ground visibility all but zero. Additional preventive hazards which appear in the field-notebooks include rabid dogs, aggressive snakes, and intense irrigation sprays. Fortunately, the areas concreted over for industrial buildings, field huts or pumping stations for irrigation were small. Areas which were completely inaccessible are shown cross-hatched on the grid-plan Fig. 3.13. More serious gaps in the total information-cover can be seen, however, on the maps and table that follow. Even if a unit was laid out, it was often possible, for any of the reasons noted above, only to make a sherd-density count rather than to collect sample finds, or else to take just a 'grab sample'; in rarer cases neither a density-count nor collection proved possible. The largest source of bias lies in the high number of Transects where it was not possible or, in the cases of small or problematic units, not desirable to create a nested Sample unit (just over one-half of Transects possess one). As can be seen, these gaps in our data are heavily localized: in particular the zone north of the Kanavaris has far patchier and less complex data than that south of the river. In the subsequent analysis, allowance will as far as possible be made for these inherent weaknesses in cover and their effects evaluated for the overall picture.

Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by local circumstances on our ideal sampling scheme, we would draw attention to the efficiency and speed with which the teams operated in producing a detailed surface survey of this very large urban area. In 1985–86, while separate teams were working elsewhere in the region, notably carrying out the urban survey at Haliartos, two small teams of 5–6 students each (including a team-leader) completed the Thespiai grid survey in the course of two summer seasons, each of around one month's duration.

Here it is our pleasure to record our gratitude and admiration for the relevant teams and their leaders, Carl (now Professor) Heron and Paul (now Dr.) Spoerry, who led the survey under our direction. Their careful field-books, sprinkled continuously with humorous comments and cartoons, have provided the fine detail of day-to-day operations, necessary to elucidate queries arising from the data-bases, as well as much amusement and good memories (Fig. 3.19).

One recollection, shared between the notebooks and our own vivid memories, is that of the 'Hounds of Thespiai'. In those days, when dogs in rural Greece were almost never treated as pets, allowed in the home or kept on a leash (in contrast to the gilded pooches on parade in Athens' Kolonaki Square), their main function in the countryside was to guard houses and sheep-folds. Apart from the violent barking which was the first form of custodianship, few ventured physical aggression unless one really intended to break into private property. To these rules of behaviour, comforting for the nervous student on field survey in Greece for the first time, the Mad Dogs of Thespies were a permanent exception. Once the field teams were in place in the lowlands of the ancient city each morning, only a few minutes of suspicious calm would elapse before a distant belling from the top of the Thespies village hill above us would announce our detection by the Mad Dogs. They would immediately pour down the hill-side towards us at a great pace, then charge at the two teams. There never seemed to be an intention to stop short and make fierce gestures: rather, one got the repeated impression that large pieces of student were believed to be on offer to the under-fed mongrels. Only a Classical education offered daily security against the presumed threat: forming a circle, the field teams would present their steel-tipped sets of 2-m ranging poles to their would-be attackers. Wonderfully, after ten minutes of the ensuing stand-off, the Mad Dogs would slink off, but one could never be sure that an unexpected reprise might not occur later in the morning.



Figure 3.19. *Carl Heron (left) and a field team, with one of the impressively versatile Ford Transit minibuses on which the Project relied in the 1980s.*



Figure 3.20. *Kalliopi Sarri (left) and visiting expert Catherine Perlès studying Neolithic surface finds at the Magoula. The Kanavaris valley runs as a green zone across the picture in middle distance and the outliers of Leondari village appear on the hilltop in the distance.*



Figure 3.21. *View of the city wall extension from the north, looking towards the Kanavaris and the most westerly sector of the 'Old Town' beyond it.*



Figure 3.22. *The Theatre hollow cut into the cliffs underlying modern Thespies village, taken from the west.*

During and after the survey seasons in the city of Thespiai, several ceramic specialists joined in the study of the finds. John Hayes amazed us with his ability to comment on almost every surface sherd from Archaic through to Early Modern times; Oliver Dickinson with the assistance of Kalliopi [Popi] Sarri (Fig. 3.20) covered our Neolithic to Late Bronze Age pieces; Anthony Snodgrass dealt with the very rare Protogeometric to Geometric finds. More recently, the collection of Iron Age to Hellenistic pieces has been re-evaluated by Vladimir Stissi (University of Amsterdam), the Roman to Late Roman finds by Jeroen Poblome and Philip Bes (Leuven University), and that of Medieval to Post-Medieval by Nassos Vionis (University of Cyprus); their comments are to be found in later chapters of this monograph.

As a result of the two seasons of urban survey, we were in possession of a very fine-detailed database of 14,433 sherds, collected from 606 large grid units (the Transects) and 316 nested small grid units (the Samples). As noted, then and in later years surface architectural finds were plotted and recorded: these will be treated in the next chapter of this volume (Chapter 4).

The ensuing part of this chapter will deal, first, with technical properties of the data-base and specific features of the notebook record which help us with the interpretation of the survey. In particular, the density-measurements are a vital element in our estimates of the maximum borders of the city, although these alone have proved to be inadequate, requiring as they do a more elaborate spatial analysis and the use of the chronological distribution maps.

Most recently, a re-analysis of the site's architectural debris by Božidar Slapšak's Ljubljana team has brought essential corrections to our older perceptions of the urban plan. The next two illustrations (Figs. 3.21 and 3.22) mark the most striking of these discoveries – the probably Hellenistic city wall extension north of the Kanavaris stream, and the nearby Theatre.



Boeotia Project, Volume II: The city of Thespiai

Few major Classical cities have disappeared so completely from view, over the centuries, as Thespiai in Central Greece. Only the technique of intensive field survey, carefully adapted to a large urban site and reinforced by historical investigation, has made it possible to recover from oblivion much of its life of seven millennia.

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