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# Boeotia Project, Volume III: Hyettos

The origins, florescence and  
afterlife of a small Boeotian city

John Bintliff, Emeri Farinetti & Anthony Snodgrass



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The origins, florescence  
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By John Bintliff, Emeri Farinetti  
& Anthony Snodgrass

*With contributions from*

Philip Bes, Yannick Boswinkel, Patrick Degryse, Lieve Donnellan, Machiel Kiel,  
Kristalla Loizou, Anna Meens, Christel Müller, Bart Noordervliet, Kalliope Sarri,  
Apostolos Sarris, Rob Shiel, Vladimir Stissi, Janneke van Zwienen, Athanasios  
Vionis & Keith Wilkinson

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University of Cambridge  
Downing Street  
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CB2 3ER  
(0)(1223) 339327  
eaj31@cam.ac.uk  
www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk



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On the front cover: *Aerial view of Hyettos (lower right foreground, with its main plain beyond and in the distance the Euboean Gulf and the mountains of Euboea (Darja Grosman).*  
On the back cover: *Drone view of site CN4 (Sta Dendri) with its small chapel far left. Beyond the plain of Hyettos and the Acropolis hill (Lieve Donnellan).*

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# CONTENTS

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                     |      |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Contributors     |                                                                                                                                                                                     | ix   |
| Figures          |                                                                                                                                                                                     | xi   |
| Tables           |                                                                                                                                                                                     | xxiv |
|                  | Introduction                                                                                                                                                                        | 1    |
|                  | JOHN BINTLIFF                                                                                                                                                                       |      |
| <i>Chapter 1</i> | Hyettos: the historical background                                                                                                                                                  | 5    |
|                  | ANTHONY SNODGRASS                                                                                                                                                                   |      |
| <i>Chapter 2</i> | The survey methodology                                                                                                                                                              | 17   |
|                  | JOHN BINTLIFF                                                                                                                                                                       |      |
|                  | The comparative density counts for town and country                                                                                                                                 | 21   |
| <i>Chapter 3</i> | The analysis of the Hyettos rural landscape (i): the zoning of the off-site finds                                                                                                   | 33   |
|                  | JOHN BINTLIFF & EMERI FARINETTI                                                                                                                                                     |      |
|                  | The dated off-site maps                                                                                                                                                             | 43   |
| <i>Chapter 4</i> | The analysis of the Hyettos rural landscape (ii): the CN rural sites                                                                                                                | 61   |
|                  | JOHN BINTLIFF & EMERI FARINETTI                                                                                                                                                     |      |
|                  | SITE CN 1                                                                                                                                                                           | 65   |
|                  | SITE CN 2                                                                                                                                                                           | 76   |
|                  | SITE CN 3                                                                                                                                                                           | 89   |
|                  | SITE CN 4                                                                                                                                                                           | 107  |
|                  | SITE CN 5                                                                                                                                                                           | 123  |
|                  | SITE CN 6                                                                                                                                                                           | 135  |
|                  | SITE CN 7                                                                                                                                                                           | 147  |
|                  | SITE CN 8                                                                                                                                                                           | 161  |
|                  | SITE CN 9                                                                                                                                                                           | 170  |
|                  | SITE CN 10                                                                                                                                                                          | 179  |
|                  | SITE CN 14                                                                                                                                                                          | 187  |
|                  | SITE CN 11                                                                                                                                                                          | 194  |
|                  | SITE CN 12                                                                                                                                                                          | 206  |
|                  | SITE CN 13                                                                                                                                                                          | 212  |
|                  | SITE CN 15                                                                                                                                                                          | 218  |
|                  | SITE CN 16                                                                                                                                                                          | 228  |
|                  | SITE CN 17                                                                                                                                                                          | 230  |
|                  | Other sites and activity areas                                                                                                                                                      | 238  |
|                  | PALAIKASTRO                                                                                                                                                                         | 239  |
| <i>Chapter 5</i> | The city site of Hyettos: analysis of the urban survey ceramics                                                                                                                     | 243  |
|                  | JOHN BINTLIFF & EMERI FARINETTI                                                                                                                                                     |      |
|                  | Prehistory                                                                                                                                                                          | 243  |
|                  | Early Iron Age                                                                                                                                                                      | 252  |
|                  | The Archaic and the Archaic to Classical periods                                                                                                                                    | 258  |
|                  | The Classical to Late Hellenistic eras (c. 500–1 BC)                                                                                                                                | 260  |
|                  | The Late Hellenistic to Roman (c. 150 BC to AD 200), Early Roman (c. AD 1 to 200), Middle Roman (c. AD 200–400), and the Early to Middle Roman maps (c. AD 1–400)                   | 274  |
|                  | The Middle Roman–Late Roman (c. 200 to mid-seventh century AD), the Late Roman (c. 400 to mid-seventh century AD) and the Roman–Late Roman maps (c. AD 1 to mid-seventh century AD) | 280  |
|                  | From Byzantine to Modern                                                                                                                                                            | 285  |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                      |     |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Chapter 6</i>  | Geology, geomorphology, geoarchaeology and land-use potential                                                                                        | 293 |
|                   | ROBERT S. SHIEL & KEITH WILKINSON                                                                                                                    |     |
|                   | Background                                                                                                                                           | 293 |
|                   | Geology                                                                                                                                              | 293 |
|                   | Climate                                                                                                                                              | 294 |
|                   | Crops                                                                                                                                                | 297 |
|                   | Methodology                                                                                                                                          | 300 |
|                   | Results                                                                                                                                              | 300 |
|                   | Discussion                                                                                                                                           | 301 |
|                   | Human food production                                                                                                                                | 309 |
|                   | Conclusions                                                                                                                                          | 310 |
| <i>Chapter 7</i>  | Soil geochemistry in archaeology, with an evaluation of a long-term programme of trace metal analysis at the ancient cities of Hyettos and Thespiiai | 313 |
|                   | JOHN BINTLIFF, PATRICK DEGRYSE & JANNEKE VAN ZWIENEN                                                                                                 |     |
|                   | Review of previous research                                                                                                                          | 313 |
|                   | The Boeotian Research Programme                                                                                                                      | 315 |
|                   | Urban research at Hyettos and Thespiiai                                                                                                              | 320 |
|                   | Results                                                                                                                                              | 322 |
|                   | The regional soil transect                                                                                                                           | 341 |
| <i>Chapter 8</i>  | The geophysical survey at Hyettos                                                                                                                    | 345 |
|                   | APOSTOLOS SARRIS & NIKOS PAPADOPOULOS                                                                                                                |     |
|                   | Methodology                                                                                                                                          | 345 |
|                   | Results                                                                                                                                              | 350 |
|                   | The magnetic survey                                                                                                                                  | 350 |
|                   | The electrical resistance and electromagnetic induction surveys                                                                                      | 355 |
|                   | Concluding remarks                                                                                                                                   | 357 |
| <i>Chapter 9</i>  | Hyettos: the architectural traces at the urban centre                                                                                                | 363 |
|                   | YANNICK BOSWINKEL & ANTHONY SNODGRASS                                                                                                                |     |
|                   | Architectural traces: mapping – Introduction<br>(Janneke van Zwienen Noordervliet & Bart Noordervliet)                                               | 363 |
|                   | Architectural traces: interpretation                                                                                                                 | 363 |
|                   | Finds density                                                                                                                                        | 363 |
|                   | Overall density                                                                                                                                      | 365 |
|                   | Types of architectural elements                                                                                                                      | 370 |
|                   | Architectural elements that are not generic building blocks                                                                                          | 370 |
|                   | Size-based analysis of the building blocks                                                                                                           | 379 |
|                   | Materials                                                                                                                                            | 383 |
|                   | Missing materials                                                                                                                                    | 384 |
|                   | Vertical elevations                                                                                                                                  | 384 |
|                   | Conclusions                                                                                                                                          | 386 |
| <i>Chapter 10</i> | Glimpses of history: Hyettos and its epigraphic testimonies                                                                                          | 387 |
|                   | CHRISTEL MÜLLER                                                                                                                                      |     |
|                   | Archaic and Classical times                                                                                                                          | 387 |
|                   | Hyettos and the Boeotian koinon (335–171 bc): the recruitment lists                                                                                  | 388 |
|                   | Hyettian civic life: Hellenistic political institutions and society                                                                                  | 391 |
|                   | Dedications at Hyettos in the second century bc: in search of the Agora                                                                              | 392 |
|                   | Imperial inscriptions and the sacred <i>gerusia</i>                                                                                                  | 393 |

|                   |                                                                                                         |     |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Chapter 11</i> | Prehistoric Hyettos                                                                                     | 397 |
|                   | KALLIOPE SARRI                                                                                          |     |
|                   | Character and expansion of prehistoric occupation                                                       | 397 |
|                   | Prehistoric finds on the Acropolis                                                                      | 398 |
|                   | Prehistoric pottery from the Lower Town                                                                 | 398 |
|                   | The prehistoric off-site material                                                                       | 400 |
|                   | Prehistoric pottery classes                                                                             | 403 |
|                   | Character and quality of the prehistoric ceramics                                                       | 403 |
|                   | Conclusions                                                                                             | 412 |
| <i>Chapter 12</i> | The pottery of the Early Iron Age to the Hellenistic Period                                             | 413 |
|                   | VLADIMIR STISSI & ANNA MEENS                                                                            |     |
|                   | The urban survey                                                                                        | 415 |
|                   | The off-site survey                                                                                     | 439 |
|                   | The rural sites survey                                                                                  | 451 |
|                   | General conclusions                                                                                     | 479 |
| <i>Chapter 13</i> | Urban and rural Hyettos: Late Hellenistic to Late Roman pottery                                         | 483 |
|                   | PHILIP BES                                                                                              |     |
|                   | Aims and methods                                                                                        | 483 |
|                   | The ceramic data: quantities and other properties                                                       | 484 |
|                   | Local and regional manufacture and circulation                                                          | 486 |
|                   | A diachronic discussion of the urban and rural pottery                                                  | 494 |
|                   | Case studies                                                                                            | 519 |
|                   | Provenance: local, regional and beyond                                                                  | 527 |
|                   | A diachronic summary for the urban, off-site and rural site pottery                                     | 534 |
| <i>Chapter 14</i> | A household archaeology and history of Hyettos and its territory: the Byzantine to Early Modern pottery | 537 |
|                   | ATHANASIOS K. VIONIS, WITH CHRYSTALLA LOIZOU                                                            |     |
|                   | Fragmentation, chronology and terminology                                                               | 538 |
|                   | Household assemblage-composition at Hyettos and the CN sites                                            | 542 |
|                   | A historical and archaeological biography of the post-Roman sites                                       | 548 |
|                   | Pottery fabrics, technology and production                                                              | 564 |
|                   | The pottery                                                                                             | 571 |
|                   | Summary and concluding remarks                                                                          | 590 |
| <i>Chapter 15</i> | Three settlements in northern Boeotia in the Ottoman and early modern Greek periods, 1460–1879          | 593 |
|                   | MACHIEL KIEL                                                                                            |     |
|                   | The economic development of Vendre                                                                      | 594 |
|                   | (Andrea) Lutsi                                                                                          | 595 |
|                   | Pavlo (Muzak)                                                                                           | 596 |
|                   | Economy                                                                                                 | 596 |
| <i>Chapter 16</i> | Synthesis: the development of the town and countryside of Hyettos from the survey evidence              | 599 |
|                   | JOHN BINTLIFF                                                                                           |     |
|                   | Prehistory                                                                                              | 599 |
|                   | The lithic finds                                                                                        | 607 |
|                   | Proto-history                                                                                           | 614 |
|                   | The Archaic Period                                                                                      | 617 |
|                   | (Archaic-) Classical to Middle Hellenistic (c. 700–150 BC)                                              | 618 |
|                   | Late Hellenistic and Early Roman (c. 150 BC–AD 200)                                                     | 631 |
|                   | Middle and Late Roman (c. AD 200–400 and 400–650)                                                       | 633 |
|                   | The Byzantine and Frankish era                                                                          | 638 |
|                   | The Frankish-Early Turkish, Middle to Late Ottoman and Early Modern eras (c. AD 1400–1900)              | 644 |

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|                   |                                                                         |     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Chapter 17</i> | Hyettos, city and countryside: conclusions                              | 651 |
|                   | JOHN BINTLIFF & ANTHONY SNODGRASS                                       |     |
|                   | Hyettos in prehistory                                                   | 651 |
|                   | Hyettos in the Early Iron Age / Protohistoric period                    | 652 |
|                   | The Archaic era                                                         | 653 |
|                   | The Classical to Middle Hellenistic period                              | 654 |
|                   | The Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Imperial period (c. 150 BC–AD 200) | 656 |
|                   | The Middle and Late Roman Imperial era                                  | 658 |
|                   | The Byzantine and Frankish eras                                         | 659 |
|                   | The Ottoman to Modern era                                               | 661 |
|                   | Epilogue                                                                | 663 |
|                   | Appendix                                                                | 669 |
|                   | JOHN BINTLIFF                                                           |     |
|                   | Off-site archaeology                                                    | 669 |
|                   | The hidden landscapes model                                             | 672 |
|                   | The relevance of these two reviews to the Hyettos Project               | 679 |
|                   | Appendix bibliography                                                   | 681 |
| Bibliography      |                                                                         | 689 |

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## CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN BINTLIFF was Professor of Classical and Mediterranean Archaeology at Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, and is now Honorary Professor in the Department of Archaeology, at the University of Edinburgh, UK (johnlbintliff@gmail.com).

EMERI FARINETTI is an Associate Professor at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy (emerifarinetti@uniroma3.it).

ANTHONY SNODGRASS is Laurence Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology of the University of Cambridge, UK (ams1002@cam.ac.uk).

\* \* \* \* \*

PHILIP BES completed his Doctorate at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. He is currently a research fellow at the University of Vienna, Austria (philipmbes@gmail.com).

YANNICK BOSWINKEL completed his Doctorate at the Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands (yboswinkel@gmail.com).

PATRICK DEGRYSE is Professor of Archaeological Sciences at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium (Patrick.degryse@kuleuven.be).

LIEVE DONNELLAN is Assistant Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Melbourne, Australia (lieve.donnellan@unimelb.edu.au).

MACHIEL KIEL was Professor at the Universiteit Utrecht, Netherlands, then Director and later Senior Research Fellow of the Netherlands Institute in Turkey.

CHRYSTALLA LOIZOU is a PhD candidate at the Department of History and Archaeology in the University of Cyprus (loizou.chrystalla@gmail.com).

ANNA MEENS took her Doctorate at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (anna\_meens@hotmail.com).

CHRISTEL MÜLLER is Professeure de l'Histoire grecque at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre, France (christel.muller@mae.u-paris10.fr).

BART NOORDERVLIET studied at the Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, and is now an independent computer consultant (bartnv@gmail.com).

KALLIOPE SARRI is Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark (kalliope.sarri@gmail.com).

APOSTOLOS SARRIS is Professor of Digital Humanities at the University of Cyprus (sarris.apostolos@ucy.ac.cy).

ROB SHIEL was formerly a Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University, UK (robert.shiel@newcastle.ac.uk).

VLADIMIR STISSI is Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands (V.V.Stissi@uva.nl).

JANNEKE VAN ZWIENEN studied at the Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, and is now a local government GIS specialist in urban planning (jannekevz@gmail.com).

ATHANASIOS VIONIS is Assistant Professor in Byzantine Archaeology and Art at the University of Cyprus (vionis@ucy.ac.cy).

KEITH WILKINSON is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Winchester, UK (Keith.Wilkinson@winchester.ac.uk).

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## Chapter 1

# Hyettos: the historical background

Anthony Snodgrass

In our previous volume, *The City of Thespiiai: Survey at a Complex Urban Site* – hereafter *Thespiiai* – we dealt with the surface archaeology of a substantial Greek city, well above average size in population and territory, with an exceptionally long life as a settlement and a place in Classical Greek history that was at times of real significance – yet with a long legacy of archaeological neglect.

Hyettos, the subject of this volume, presents several contrasts, one of which is important: that, over forty years ago now, a detailed study by Roland Étienne and Denis Knoepfler was devoted to it (Étienne & Knoepfler 1976 – hereafter *HB*) covering, especially in its ‘Première Partie’ (pp. 3–262) a wider range than any work that had been available to us for Thespiiai. To the obvious question, whether there have been major advances in our knowledge of Hyettos during the subsequent fifty-odd years, the answer is a disappointing one, at least on the archaeological side. This was a city whose limited size and relative obscurity, even though it intermittently enjoyed the same status as an independent Greek *polis* as its peers and neighbours, excluded it from many of the roles which they could play: its fortunes were as widely ignored in the ancient historical sources as was its locality by the early Western Travellers; and to this day, that has curtailed the range of studies to which it is susceptible. Thus, even identification of the site of Hyettos had to wait until three-quarters of a century later than at Thespiiai (already belated enough), and subsequent research lagged still further behind. The result of all this is that our debt to Étienne and Knoepfler’s work, which did much to fill this lacuna at the time, will still prove considerable.

Besides certain striking contrasts – such as the near-complete absence of architectural marble as a building material at Hyettos, as against its profusion at Thespiiai – there are also differences in the available

evidence that work to the advantage of Hyettos, as well as a very few parallels in the stories of these two Boeotian cities. The exceptional fertility of the terrain in and around the city of Thespiiai which, as we pointed out at the time (*Thespiiai* 387), has in the long run proved its undoing as an archaeological site, is not entirely matched at Hyettos. The soil here has not undergone such intensive agricultural disturbance over the millennia. The most obvious and positive result of this is that so much more ancient architecture survives at Hyettos, notably in the shape of fortification; while for the same reason, the geophysical exploration of the site has here proved much more fruitful for the domestic and other civilian aspects. Again, the presence of ancient tombs and cemeteries, so elusive in the case of Thespiiai (*Thespiiai* 56–65, 183–8), was readily established at Hyettos, through reports of earlier travellers and finds of inscribed tombstones. A number of graves are still visible, whether rock-cut or as pits in the surface soil, and are undoubtedly of Greco-Roman date (compare *HB* 113–15).

There are also major and minor parallels between the two cases (besides the basic fact that both sites are better-known to epigraphy than to archaeology). Thus both cities, if to different degrees, lay at a distance from the main long-distance transit routes, ancient and especially modern, that cross Boeotia on the way northwards and westwards from Athens. This factor is much more pronounced in the case of Hyettos. Only since 1962, when the new motorway between Athens and Lamia was opened, to run a mere dozen kilometres to the east, has the site been at all readily accessible from a major road. The nearest village, Loutsi, instead of directly overlooking the ancient site as at Thespiiai, lies 2 km away and is intervisible with the Acropolis, but not with the Lower Town, of Hyettos; accordingly, it seems that no move was made in the course of the twentieth century to re-name either Loutsi or

the next nearest village, Pavlo, after the ancient city, as happened so widely elsewhere: to the contrary, a signpost in Pavlo village today directs the visitor to 'The ancient citadel of Pavlo' – that is, the Acropolis of Hyettos (below, Chapter 16, p. 649).

Not all the consequences of this isolation were unfavourable, but one incontrovertible loss is that apparently not one of those notable travellers E.D. Clarke, Edward Dodwell, W.M. Leake, William Gell, Ludwig Ross or Heinrich Ulrichs, all of whom had valuable testimony to offer on lost features at Thespiiai, ever visited Hyettos. Ulrichs in fact passed fairly close by and his slightly later contemporary, the Swiss Wilhelm Vischer, came as near as Pavlo, 3 km away from our site: in their time, the northern shore of Lake Copais had become so marshy that many travellers made a reluctant uphill detour to avoid the wettest stretch (see *HB* 193–5). But according to *HB* (5, n.5; 196, n.648), F.C.H.L. Pouqueville, writing in the same general period, had access to the (very low) population figures for the entire basin in which ancient Hyettos lies: just forty families, distributed over four hamlets (recorded in a later (1836) edition of his *Voyage dans la Grèce*).

More significantly, as shown in Chapter 2, pp. 21–8, there are striking similarities in the levels and gradation of ceramic densities, as one moves from the outer fringes to the core, at the two cities, Thespiiai and Hyettos – notwithstanding the marked difference of scale. But although the density levels match, their radii differ sharply with the differential city size: Hyettos, too, is much more abruptly bounded at the edges, with a clear fall-off on all sides as one passes into the likely burial zones.

One other, more marginal parallel might be mentioned. Just as, by the publication of his *Ancient and Modern Geography* in 1728, Archbishop Meletios (as noted in *Thespiiai* 9–11) had in fact recorded the finding of ancient inscriptions on the site of Thespiiai that named the city, and thus could have solved the problem of its long-debated identification, which was finally settled only many years later; so too it was Meletios who included an important inscription, of Roman date, built into the church of Agios Nikolaos which adjoins the site of Hyettos (the later *IG* vii. 2808: for more detail on this important inscription, see *HB* 6–7, nn.10–11; 15, n.50 etc., with 183, fig. 94). But this time the inscription unfortunately gave no city name: it recorded the proceedings of a 'Council of Elders of Asklepios', enough to indicate a formal, organized community with its own religious administration. One might have thought that its find-spot, just a couple of hundred metres away from a conspicuously fortified acropolis, was enough to point to city status for

the community in question, whatever its name; and the candidates available for its identification were few indeed.

But for most of the investigators of this time, the second-century AD *Guide to Greece* of Pausanias was to be treated with special deference, as the work of the author whom they saw as their ancient predecessor; and Pausanias had written these words about Hyettos and its close neighbour Olmones (9. 24. 3): 'They are villages now and always have been'. The word translated as 'villages' (*kōmai*) is the standard term for a second-order settlement in the territory of an independent city or *polis*, and Pausanias then spells out this status by naming the *polis* in question as Orchomenos.

These two sentences in Pausanias, with their uncompromising wording, were to bear much responsibility over later centuries. The early modern Travellers, still preoccupied with settling the locations and identities of the hundreds of *poleis* in mainland Greece, could not pay equal attention to their subordinate settlements, tending to neglect them unless they were the scene of some prominent historical episode, as Hyettos was not. P.W. Forchhammer in 1834 seems to have been the earliest western Traveller to visit the site (and to identify it, wrongly, as ancient Kyrtones, *HB* 4). This neglect was to persist. It was not until some seventeen centuries after Pausanias's time that doubts began to be raised, on epigraphical grounds, over his dismissal of Hyettos as a *kōme*; the first correct identification of the site had to wait until as late as 1873; and it was only through a discovery, made far away at Olympia in 1960 (as we shall see), that Pausanias's judgment of the status of Hyettos was finally and decisively shown, at least for the Late Archaic period of the sixth century BC, to have been mistaken.

A final incidental link with Thespiiai comes with the name of that perennially underrated archaeologist, Panagiotis Stamatakis (c. 1845–1885). It was he who in 1882 made the single most important discovery by excavation at Thespiiai, the city's official war grave or *Polyandrion* (*Thespiiai* 15 and *passim*); but before this, as a young member of the Greek Archaeological service, he had had the distinction of being the first to propose, early in 1873, the correct identification of the site of Hyettos (*HB* 5–7), a conclusion the more remarkable for its tacit disregard of Pausanias. Within less than two years, his insight had been vindicated by the reading of a Severan inscription on the site which at last named the city as Hyettos (*IG* vii. 2833). The claim by P. Girard (1878, 492) that he also undertook excavations there is however false (*HB* 5–6, n.6). A year or so later again H.G. Lolling, working on the preparation of Karl Baedeker's guide to Greece, could take the city's identity for granted; his visit is useful for the

observation of graves on the stony hill-slopes to the north of the Acropolis (Lolling [1989], 677–8). (As for Stamatakis, it is gratifying that, a century and a quarter after his death, newly-found documents have established him as the true excavator of the famous Shaft Grave Circle A at Mycenae, trumpeted by Heinrich Schliemann as a highlight of his own career (Dickinson *et al.*, 2012; Konstantinidi-Sivridi and Paschalidis 2019). His achievements in Boeotia, though infinitely less prominent, should also be remembered to his lasting credit).

It is time to turn to Hyettos in its own right. The long-running debate over its political status in antiquity, sketched in part just now (pp. 5–6), has still left room for discussion today. The Copenhagen Polis Centre has devoted the quarter-century of its existence to a very close scrutiny of the ancient city-state in general; Mogens Herman Hansen has personally addressed the problematic status of the Boeotian *poleis* and the test case of Hyettos in particular (Hansen 1995, 13–63; Hansen and Nielsen, eds. 2004, 442–3). It is not until the mid-third century BC that we have an explicit epigraphic reference to Hyettos as a *polis*, but strong circumstantial evidence has convinced Hansen that it enjoyed that status, first under the constitution of the Boeotian League in the period 447–386 BC, described in the text of the ‘Oxyrhynchus Historian’ (Hansen 1995, 17), then again under the ‘Hellenistic League’ of 338–172 BC (1995, 29). In the former period it is said to have shared with Orchomenos, though on an unequal basis, the second-largest of the eleven administrative districts of the League; in the latter, a nominal equality of status prevailed for all the sixteen member cities.

But similar inferences can be applied to a much earlier date, thanks to the discovery in 1960, in a well at Olympia, of a piece of body armour (a left leg-guard or greave) with a surprising inscription: ‘The Thebans [won this] from the Hyettians’. It was a common practice at this time to dedicate to Zeus at Olympia the captured armour and other spoils, taken from a defeated enemy; the conclusion must be that the Thebans had won a military victory over Hyettos (see HB 215–18 and fig. 100 for the find). It is perfectly possible that the Hyettians formed just one contingent in a combined force, perhaps including Orchomenos and / or other cities: otherwise, the scales would appear impossibly weighted in favour of the greatest Boeotian city and against one of the obscurest. Yet the fact remains that the Thebans felt it appropriate to single out the Hyettian force by name. This goes far to show that, at a date in the late sixth century BC but before the end of the Archaic period, Hyettos was already recognized as an independent political entity.

To this one can add the observation, first made by the finder Emil Kunze (Kunze 1967, 98–100, with fig. 34.2 and pl.47), that the workmanship of the greave is of the highest quality, showing the prosperity attained by at least one member of the city’s *hoplitai*, or heavy infantry force (compare also Kunze 1991, 105, no. III.27; 128, no. V.8, with the suggestion (70) of manufacture outside Boeotia).

There are, then, altogether three periods, together comprising a large part of the recorded history of Boeotia from the later sixth to the earlier second centuries BC, during which Hyettos appears to have enjoyed *polis* status, or something close to it. There may still be room for argument, in respect of the second of these periods, over the exact significance of the wording used by the ‘Oxyrhynchus Historian’ in describing the administrative district of ‘the Orchomenians *and* the Hyettians’, when elsewhere he seems to indicate subordinate status by using the word ‘with’ instead of ‘and’ – in, for example, the district assigned to ‘the Thespians *with* those of Eutresis and Thisbe’. But another inscription from Olympia has given at least indirect support for this reading of the Oxyrhynchus text (Siewert 1977).

So today it should be widely conceded that Hyettos enjoyed long periods of independence or, in relation to Orchomenos, at least of semi-independence; and that the years shortly before or after 500 BC featured, as perhaps the most prominent example, among these periods – the confrontation with Thebes, the possible building of the polygonal fortification wall around the Acropolis, and extension of the Lower Town to perhaps about 10 ha. (For the Acropolis wall, Étienne and Knoepfler, HB 63–4, were content to argue for a date no later than 500 BC, but research in recent decades has tended to lower the terminal date of this style of construction: see also below, p. 11).

For this same period of history, there arises a long-debated issue in a quite separate field, that of numismatics. There is a series of silver *stater*, *drachma*, *hemidrachm* and *obol* coins, evidently belonging to a Boeotian city, which are marked on either the obverse or the reverse with a sign shown to be the simple aspirate (‘h’) of Archaic times, or a little later. The sign reappears, perhaps as a conscious revival, on much later, Hellenistic, coinage, when it can equally convincingly be connected with Boeotia. But there is more than one Boeotian city whose name begins with an aspirate: the traditional view, which persisted for more than a century, was that this coinage derived from Haliartos, an assignment that found favour, in part because of purely historical considerations – the relative prominence of Haliartos in Classical and earlier Hellenistic times. Then Étienne and Knoepfler (HB

218–26) argued, in great detail, that Hyettos had the stronger claim to be the mysterious ‘aspirated city’. In response, Richard Ashton, in a series of articles in *Numismatic Chronicle*, has used fresh arguments to restate the case for Haliartos; (Ashton 1995; 1997; 2000; Ashton and Meadows 2008, 122–9); and the debate has continued, if partly in respect of the later, Hellenistic, coins which bear the same symbol but do not otherwise concern us here.

Several of the arguments involved in this debate are decidedly technical in nature: for these, numismatists are the best, if not the only, proper judges. But it is worth taking another look at the ‘purely historical considerations’ mentioned above. For the documented history of Classical and Hellenistic times, it is beyond argument that Haliartos cuts by far the more impressive figure of the two cities. With a fortified acropolis covering some 9 ha and a walled lower town enclosing a further more than 20 ha, it could house a significantly higher population than Hyettos. Its defiance of Rome in 172/171 BC hints at this prowess; and the report that, after its fall, over 2000 men of military age (out of a total of 2,500, including a small contingent of younger recruits from Koroneia) were sold into slavery (Livy 42, 63, 3; 11) hints at a total free population of something like 8,000. All these figures compare favourably with those for Classical Hyettos that we shall turn to in a moment.

And yet: our latest evaluation of the fortification sequence at Haliartos has revealed that there is little or no evidence for a wall around the lower town until after 400 BC – in other words, that the wall protecting Archaic and earlier Classical Haliartos was confined to the 9 ha of the acropolis, though there was undoubtedly some settlement of the Lower Town. It is clear that the city expanded dramatically between c. 400 BC and its destruction in 171 BC. At Hyettos, there is a contrasting trajectory: we have just considered the evidence for a degree of prominence in Late Archaic times, whereas the extent of the Lower Town (whether or not surrounded by a wall) was estimated by Étienne and Knoepfler at some 10 ha. (HB 146), with no sign of further growth beyond this size, in a life that extended down into late Roman Imperial times. Our own studies of the ceramic and geophysical evidence, presented in subsequent chapters, suggest some increase in this figure, up to c. 16 ha including the Acropolis. From all this, one far-reaching conclusion emerges: the predicted growth, usually from the fifth century BC onwards, that characterized most Boeotian cities and is exemplified by Haliartos, apparently never happened at Hyettos: events such as the destruction of Thebes in 335 BC, evidently taken as a special opportunity for expansion by its larger Boeotian neighbours, seem to have had

little impact at Hyettos. Conceivably its especially close relationship with another much larger city, Orchomenos, had something to do with this. Orchomenos, once the undisputed second city of Boeotia, had been progressively eclipsed, then ruthlessly destroyed by the Thebans in 364 BC. When Thebes itself was destroyed in 335, one would predict that Orchomenos would have as much or more to gain from this temporary power vacuum, as well as a stronger motivation for retribution, than any other power. There is substantial evidence that the opportunity was taken, in the extensive building works of this era – above all, the ambitious fortification programme – at Orchomenos itself (Fittschen 2003).

This makes a plausible setting for a corresponding eclipse of Hyettos by its once again powerful neighbour. More specifically, it seems that Hyettos may have anyway reached a natural ceiling in respect of its urban expansion: see in particular the demographic and ecological calculations in Chapter 5 below, pp. 268–74, with the finding that the city was now approaching the maximum population supportable from its territory. If no territorial extension was possible save at the expense of Orchomenos, then one of the possible responses available was the purely internal expedient that was actually followed: the laying out of a new grid-plan for the Lower Town (see below, pp. 10–11, 13).

The structure of the Hellenistic League, as noted earlier, was nominally egalitarian among all its 16 members, yet with Hyettos and other lesser cities having only intermittent access to representation in the powerful administrative offices that their larger neighbours enjoyed every year: could this formal state of affairs perhaps have opened the door to some kind of covert suppression of the weaker by the stronger, whether *de facto* or *de iure*, which stunted the natural growth of Hyettos? A marked contraction in the ceramic spread, as revealed in the survey, is seen only in the Late Hellenistic (after c. 150 BC): it may reflect the belated impact of a decline, first registered in the somewhat earlier recruitment lists (below, pp. 9–10 and Chapter 10). There may be an additional, however remote, connection here with the strange absence of marble building stone, particularly in this period of likely urban construction (above, p. 3): was Hyettos consistently cut off from the contacts that could have supplied it with this habitual feature of *polis* architecture? Certainly, the city’s ceramic record throughout this era is a rather impoverished one in terms of quality: see Chapter 12 below, especially pp. 416, 427–9.

To return to the numismatic question: while the rehabilitation of Archaic Hyettos is welcome, the disparagement of early Haliartos as a likely source of a notable Late Archaic coin issue may have gone too

far. True, chronological observations mean that at the period in question, the pre-eminence of Haliartos over Hyettos was not as strong as it was later to become. Yet Late Archaic Haliartos was already becoming a city to be reckoned with: by this time, it had featured not only in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships (*Iliad* 2, 503) but in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (line 243). Then, at some date probably around or after 500 BC, the city invested in a finely-built acropolis wall of 'Lesbian' masonry to supplant and strengthen its prehistoric fortification; while a partly visible *temenos* wall of similar style and date surrounded the Athena temple on the acropolis excavated by R.P. Austin, itself of sixth-century date, with an even earlier predecessor. By the time of the Peloponnesian War, Haliartos was prominent enough to be one of only seven cities named by Thucydides as forming the victorious Boeotian army at the battle of Delion in 424 BC (4, 93, 4).

For the present, it seems best to treat the issue as unsettled. Either city would make a credible source for the series, but it would certainly be wrong to rely definitively on the Archaic coinage as a measure of the standing of either.

\* \* \* \* \*

The city site of Hyettos comprises, first a small but prominent Acropolis, covering some 2.5 ha of habitable ground within its fortification walls, which are traceable for most of their extent: the ground slopes gently outwards from a highest point of 317 m a.s.l. as far as the walls, then much more steeply outside them, down to the level of the modern road to the southeast, at about 250 m and beyond (see the useful folding contour map in *HB*, fig. 9 between pp. 46 and 47). At the highest point stands the little chapel of Agios Athanasios, which may well have had an Early Christian predecessor, surrounded as it is by traces of underlying structures of the Late Roman period, with a piece of a mosaic of similar date found actually within it; while icons in the present-day church preserve a date of AD 1685 (*HB* 14–15, 61, 260–61, fig. 102).

Outside the fortifications, a Lower Town of perhaps some 13 ha extends almost entirely to the south, linked to the Acropolis by a sloping ramp and at least one small postern gate; its approximate limits, once established, have been repeatedly confirmed, by the recorded densities in the pottery scatters, by the spread of structures located in the geophysical survey, and by the presence of visible tombs that must have lain outside the settlement area, close to the Acropolis on the east and the west sides; a similar absence of settlement to the north of the Acropolis, where the escarpment falls steeply to a strip of rocky, maquis-covered ground,

is similarly explained by the terrain, and by Lolling's observation of tombs here.

Was the Lower Town itself ever fortified? Here, Étienne and Knoepfler concluded (*HB* 143–5 with n.434) that it was not, after their very close scrutiny of the Acropolis circuit had produced no trace of a junction of walls. That argument is, however, not quite conclusive on its own; and the only other relevant observation that they made was of a grouping of unusually large blocks around the Agios Nikolaos church, big enough to stem from a rampart. This question will be addressed in the analysis of the geophysical evidence (Chapter 8), and again in Chapter 9, pp. 372, 379–82; here it is enough to say that, near the southwestern corner of the Lower Town, a series of anomalous alignments that do not follow the orientation of the city's grid plan were detected, by a combination of soil resistivity and electro-magnetic testing, that could well represent the line of a fortification, breached by a western gate. Especially notable are the anomalies R24 and R23 that appear to carry the line round the corner from the west to the southeast, suggesting that the city's lower boundary may have run here, before following or crossing the modern road (for all this, see also Chapter 2 below, pp. 23, 27–9). If in some earlier periods the space within the fortified Acropolis may have allowed, in emergency, for the entire population of the urban centre, and perhaps of the outlying rural sites as well, to be accommodated inside the Acropolis walls without undue hardship, this was evidently no longer the case.

As to the size of that population, we shall be advancing estimates (Chapter 2 below, pp. 29–30) that are based primarily on the results of the remarkably productive geophysical testing, of what seems to be not much short of the entire Lower Town. Here there will be an invaluable independent check, in the shape of the estimate reached on an entirely different basis by Étienne and Knoepfler, for the population in the later third and earlier second centuries BC (*HB* 201–10 with fig. 99). They made their calculations on the basis of the annual lists of military recruits, in the class of 20-year-olds, recorded in the series of inscriptions cut into the outer face of the Acropolis walls. In the inscriptions that survive, the number of these averages out at 10.8 per year; and the adoption of a suitable multiplier yields a total free male population of some 570 at most, a hoplite force of half that number, and perhaps an overall free population of 1,300, plus slaves. Hansen (2005, 443) accepts these estimates. The figures make a striking contrast with the reported number of some 2,500 male captives of military age (which however included a small contingent from neighbouring Koroneia) at the fall of Haliartos in 171 BC (above, p. 8).

Probably, however, the years covered by the surviving recruitment lists at Hyettos – from the 250s or the 230s to the 160s BC – did not represent a demographic peak for the city: Étienne and Knoepfler themselves (*HB* 233, n.833) certainly believed the population of that time to have been lower than in the fifth century. Here we enter more speculative territory: the regular urban layout of the Lower Town revealed by the geophysical testing, with a grid plan oriented almost due N–S, can be dated only within very wide limits. Parallels with the town plans at other Boeotian cities, some of them more closely datable, suggest that the grid plan retrieved at Hyettos is likely to belong after c. 400 BC, just possibly to the earlier Hellenistic period. The ceramic evidence tells a much longer story in temporal terms, but a fairly similar one spatially: the intensive urban coverage, extending to the perceived limits of domestic settlement, yielded a scatter of pottery from a series of much earlier periods, spread over a somewhat wider area than that covered by the geophysical testing, especially in the northwestern sector of the Lower Town in the Geometric and Archaic phases, and possibly beyond the modern road to the south by Hellenistic times. Thus what we called (in the case of Thespiiai) the ‘ceramic city’ does go beyond the more precise delineation reflected in the geophysics, and appears to have been more extensive, if perhaps less dense, than during the lifetime of the grid plan.

An additional point about this town plan should be made here: the pre-modern and modern cultivation activity at the urban site in no way respected the orientation of the ancient streets. On the contrary, whereas the grid plan was regularly aligned from just west of north to just east of south (c. 350° / 170°), the cultivation strips run roughly northwest to southeast (315° / 135°), and are thus off-set by some 35° from the ancient layout. This is important when one considers the present-day distribution of the hundreds of ancient building-blocks over the site (below): in the great majority of cases this mirrors, not the ancient grid plan, but the pre-modern cultivation pattern and its associated farm tracks – the result of the clearing operations by farmers, who wanted unobstructed access to their fields and so moved the blocks to the field-boundaries or to the edges of the tracks. (There is an interesting contrast here with another of our urban sites, Haliartos, where the modern cultivation strips generally do follow the alignments and widths of the ancient street-plan in the Lower Town, recovered by a combination of geophysics, aerial photography and surface observation: as a result, many of the blocks at Haliartos, with its wide open modern cultivation pattern, can claim to have been left more or less *in situ*,

whereas no such assertion can be made for Hyettos, with its network of small, walled fields).

Further confirmation of the limits of this urban plan comes from the locations of the cemeteries mentioned above (p. 5). Étienne and Knoepfler described these as forming a crescent shape, all round the northern, eastern and western sides of the Acropolis, leaving just the southern sector free for domestic settlement (*HB* 115). The eastern and western tips of this crescent act to circumscribe, to some extent, any potential lateral extension of the domestic sector; and to these established cemeteries we have now added a further one to the south, lying mainly just beyond the Agios Nikolaos church. There is also another external constraint, slightly further away, which puts a likely limit on the southward expansion of the built-up area: this is the perennial stream, with its fairly steep-sided ravine, which curls round the southeastern edge of the Lower Town and whose importance was stressed by Étienne and Knoepfler (*HB* 145, fig. 79). Thus the positive findings of the ceramic distribution and the geophysical survey, backed by the negative constraint imposed by the burials and the ravine, all agree in presenting a rough, curvilinear triangular area, with perhaps a maximum width of 550 m from west to east, with an *average* north-to-south extent of only some 300 m (Chapter 8, p. 360), but one that is maintained over a far greater length, running diagonally from the northeast to the southwest for approaching 700 m (cf. Ch. 5 below, Figure 5.8). These would then form the extreme outer limits for the expansion of the Lower Town, at any time in antiquity.

This brings us back to the problems of chronology, both historical and archaeological. The latter aspect is to be addressed in later chapters, but already at this point, we must draw attention to our first major departure from the findings of Étienne and Knoepfler. Noting that the place-name ‘Hyettos’ points to an early, perhaps pre-Greek origin for a settlement so named, but that the name is nevertheless absent from the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*, and after a less than exhaustive surface examination of the Acropolis, they reported that not a single potsherd certainly datable to any period earlier than the Archaic came to light;<sup>1</sup> and this surprising conclusion was supported by J.M. Fossey on the basis of his own fieldwork (*HB* 212). By contrast, our own intensive coverage revealed numerous Neolithic finds from within, and immediately adjacent to, the Acropolis walls. Then, each main phase of the Bronze Age is represented, again mainly on the Acropolis but now with a rather thin scatter in the Lower Town too. Next, and to a degree unmatched in our previous experience of Boeotian urban centres, there is a spread of definite Early Iron Age and Geometric

sherds from all over the Lower Town (though few from the Acropolis), that is both fuller and more extensive than those of the preceding era. We take all this more as a striking endorsement of the value of the type of laborious intensive survey that we practise, rather than as a criticism of our predecessors.

No mention has yet been made of the rural territory of Hyettos and the separate rural settlements discovered in an extensive swathe of that territory (approaching 3 sq. km in area) lying to the north of the Acropolis. Here there is a hint of a reversal of the situation on the city site; for while the great majority of the identified rural sites (13 out of 17) show undoubted signs of Prehistoric activity, during the Bronze Age and sometimes in the Neolithic before that, there is a near-complete absence of the definitely Early Iron Age fabrics that are found in the city. What is present on a few of the rural sites, notably CN 2, is a range of wares less closely datable, but covering periods before, during and after the Early Iron Age. On balance, the likeliest reading might be that a very early dispersal, of activity and even settlement, into the surrounding countryside, was followed by a retraction into the more concentrated, hitherto barely settled area of the future Lower Town, with just one or two outlying sites. This would be an interesting sequence of developments, pointing clearly to the Early Iron Age as the time of origin of the later *polis* centre.

With the Archaic age of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, we at last reach a period when the development of Hyettos begins to conform to the patterns found in other *poleis*, both in and beyond Boeotia. The most obvious change is in density: beginning with the ceramic category 'G[eometric] to A[rchaic]', then more strongly with the Archaic and its associated 'bridge' classes with earlier ('Late Helladic / Early Iron Age to Archaic') and later periods ('Archaic to Classical', 'Archaic to Hellenistic'), the finds cover the Lower Town and the Acropolis ever more densely. The only apparent anomaly is a marked weighting towards the west of the Lower Town. This imbalance will only be fully corrected in the Roman era; it recalls a parallel feature noted at Thespiiai, and explained there primarily by the suppression of earlier material by the later and denser overlay of Roman ceramics towards the east (*Thespiiai* 46–7). When taken with the fragments of material evidence that hint at an early high point in the career of Hyettos (above, pp. 8–10), the pottery finds give welcome support to that hypothesis. So too, if more modestly, does the fact that, out of at least eleven of the outlying rural sites with potential Classical Greek occupation, a number show at least a possibility of having originated before the end of the Archaic period.

To return to the historical evidence: for the Classical period, from the end of the Persian invasions in 479 to the death of Alexander in 323 BC, any historical account for Hyettos must do without the expected primary sources. There is no mention of the city, either in Herodotus's account of the Persian army's operations in Boeotia (Books 8 and 9, *passim*), nor in the few sentences devoted by Thucydides (1.90.2) to the aftermath of the Persian Wars and the retribution envisaged for the Boeotian cities for their support of, or failure to resist, the Persians. There is no sign that the splendid polygonal wall round the Acropolis of Hyettos was damaged in the wars (so *HB* 234) – but that is always assuming that it had been constructed before this time (cf. above, p. 8). There is now at least some circumstantial evidence from elsewhere, that the polygonal style of walling, and specifically the 'Lesbian' version of this in which the edges of some of the polygonal blocks are curvilinear (see below, Figure 2.4), remained in favour well into the fifth century: thus, the fragmentary first wall at Boeotian Plataia, which had a few comparable features, has now been firmly dated after 479 BC, on the basis of the kind of historical evidence which we lack at Hyettos (Konecny *et al.* 2013, 58–61; 377, fig. 6, with parallel evidence from Wall III at Eretria and the Wall of Themistokles at the Athenian Kerameikos).

In the absence of any further documentation for the generation after the Persian Wars, modern accounts of the history of Hyettos have turned perforce to the pages of the 'Oxyrhynchus Historian' (above, p. 7) where the constitution of the Boeotian League in the later part of the fifth century is described by an author who writes about it as in the past, from a viewpoint in the earlier part of the following century. The establishment of this constitution dates back to 447 or 446 BC, when a decade of Athenian control over Boeotia was brought to an end by the defeat of an Athenian force at Koroneia, at the hands of a coalition of Boeotian rebels. This coalition had been led by men from Orchomenos who had been exiled under the Athenian ascendancy – which is important because from now on, under the terms described earlier (p. 7), 'the Orchomenians and the Hyettians' together shared two of the eleven administrative districts of the League, by 395 at the latest. In the sharing of these two districts, it was Étienne and Knoepfler's reasonable conjecture that Hyettos counted for just one-third of a district, so as to leave Orchomenos with a residue adequate for its importance, namely one and two-thirds (*HB* 232–3).

But apart from any residual doubts about the significance of the precise wording here, it cannot be taken for granted that every detail of the constitution goes back to its origins in 447–46. There is in fact some

conflicting evidence in the case of Chaironeia: one of a group of six other smallish cities who between them shared a further two districts under the constitution, it is nevertheless referred to by Thucydides (4. 76. 3) as still a dependency of Orchomenos in 424 bc. If this was an accurate statement, then a possibility exists that Hyettos too, as an equally close neighbour of the powerful Orchomenos, achieved its measure of independence only later – yet certainly before 395 when, as noted, it is listed separately.

But the ‘Oxyrhynchus Historian’ is alone, for this period, in referring to Hyettos by name; Thucydides gives another conspicuous instance of its omission when he enumerates the city contingents taking part in the victorious battle at Delion against the Athenians in 424 bc (4. 93. 4). The contingent from Orchomenos is listed separately, as forming part of the left wing of the Boeotian battle line; but among the forces in the centre, he writes, stood the men of ‘Kopai and the others around the lake’ (sc. Lake Kopais). It has been reasonably argued that these other places included the two immediate neighbours of Kopai, namely Hyettos and Akraiphia, and that accordingly Hyettos would appear to have been independent in 424 (so *HB* 235); but these inferences fall short of being conclusive.

A similar silence unfortunately prevails for the ensuing period of the ‘Theban League’. Three salient longer-term developments in Boeotia were the secession of Orchomenos from the League from about 395 until, after a temporary phase of readmission, its punitive destruction came about at the hands of Thebes in 364; the intrusion of the Spartans who, well before that, had installed permanent garrisons not only there but also at Thespiiai, Plataia and, much more briefly, in Thebes itself; and above all, the gradual resurgence of Theban power which, after the expulsion of its own Spartan garrison in 379, steadily assumed control over the lesser Boeotian cities one after another, excepting only the three that retained their Spartan garrisons. These processes set the stage for the great *dénouement* of the battle of Leuktra in 371, when the Theban victory dealt a mortal blow to Spartan power, not only in Boeotia but all over Greece.

The complex interaction of these changes leaves much room for debate over the fate of the unmentioned city of Hyettos. Did she join Orchomenos in seceding from the League in 395? Did she continue on the same course by lending support to the intervention of the Spartans in the 380s, albeit without herself accommodating one of their garrisons? Did she submit to the power of Thebes when, in the 370s, it became too strong to resist, leaving Orchomenos entirely isolated? The pages (*HB* 235–9) which Étienne and Knoepfler devoted to these problems depend very closely on a

strict, literal understanding of the ancient sources: holding, for instance, that the recorded absence of an Orchomenian contingent, *alone*, from the Boeotian army at the battle of the Nemea River in 394 bc, means that the Hyettians were therefore present as an independent force (*HB* 236, nn. 852, 853) – when non-Boeotian writers like Xenophon and Andokides could well have treated Hyettos as part of ‘Orchomenos’ without saying so. Likewise, the decision of the Thebans under Pelopidas to march through Hyettian territory, on the way to their earlier victory over the Spartans at Tegyra in 375, does not quite demonstrate that Hyettos was by then already under Theban sway (so *HB* 237).

Such questions begin to pale into insignificance, however, after 379 bc when Theban domination, under its now democratic regime, was progressively extended over Boeotia, until the decisive battle of Leuktra in 371 removed the only remaining obstacle to the complete ascendancy of Thebes, namely the three surviving Spartan garrisons. For Hyettos at this time, we can only say that there is no sign of its having shared the grim fate of Orchomenos, utterly destroyed in 364 with the massacre or enslavement of its population: this perhaps hints at a degree of separation between the policies of the two cities in the preceding years. But no significant information can be gained for Hyettos, nor change detected, in the evidence historical, archaeological or epigraphical, until after the condition of all Boeotia had again been transformed, by the eventual defeat of Thebes at the hands of Philip of Macedon at Chaironeia in 338 bc.

The documentary silence that affects Hyettos over virtually the whole of the strictly ‘Classical’ epoch, between 480 and 323 bc, is only partially compensated for by the ceramic and geophysical evidence. The Acropolis remains in full occupation, but the great positive achievement, in all probability of this period, is the planned layout of the Lower Town in a series of *insulae*, separated by broad streets (up to 6 m wide) that run almost due north–south. This piece of urban planning invites immediate comparison with that in the Lower Town of Haliartos, which can be dated there, with some confidence, after 400 bc. At the same time, it is striking that, in extent, it stays entirely within the area of the ‘ceramic city’, as defined in Archaic times and, more sketchily, in the Early Iron Age. This in itself could be taken as evidence for the existence, in the Classical period or soon afterwards, of a wall around the Lower Town (above, p. 9); more certainly, it establishes that the urban population had now stabilized, at a level that could be housed in a planned, well-ordered settlement. The continued use of the cemeteries that flanked the city to the east, south and northwest acted as a further constraint on spatial expansion.

A second prominent feature is an exceptional concentration of fine Classical sherds and figurine fragments in a dense focus, at a locality just east or southeast of the centre of the Lower Town: already in Late Geometric and Archaic times there had been a hint that this was in some way a special location, standing out as it did against the more thinly occupied eastern half of the site. There can be little doubt that we are dealing here with a sanctuary, one of the city's most frequented: not even the overlay of later, Roman material could obscure its prominence. A Doric capital from an unfluted column, found nearby (# 847), suggests the presence of a temple or other monumental building; a few figurine fragments suggest its dedication to a female deity. A surprising adjunct of this sanctuary is that, immediately to its northwest and so more or less in the exact centre of the Lower Town, there appears a zone curiously empty of finds: first detectable in the 'Archaic / Classical' map, this negative feature will persist some way into Classical times and is still faintly traceable in the earlier Hellenistic. Here we recall a parallel feature at Thespiiai, where the central zone enclosed in the *Kastro* wall showed a similarly thin presence of pre-Roman material: our primary explanation there was in terms of the swamping effect of the overlay of Roman pottery (cf. *Thespiiai* 46–47). But a potential contributory factor could have had to do with the location hereabouts of the civic centre of the city (the Greek *agora* and later the Roman forum), where domestic rubbish would not be allowed to accumulate to the same level as elsewhere (cf. *Thespiiai* 90, 183). At Thespiiai, such an explanation is mainly supported by circumstantial evidence, but at Hyyettos by more than that: for it was just at the western edge of this empty area that Étienne and Knoepfler made perhaps their most striking single discovery: a stone, half-embedded in the soil, and clearly *in situ*, bearing the inscription ΔΙΟΣ ΑΓΟΡΑΙΟΥ – 'of Zeus of the *agora*' (*HB* 151–55). They took this marker, undoubtedly rightly, to indicate the close proximity of the *agora* itself. The inscription, which is still in place, faces westwards, that is away from our empty zone; for persons approaching from that side, it would act as a signal that they were about to enter an area dedicated to civic functions, with Zeus as the presiding deity. Be that as it may, it is remarkable to find such an apparent near-vacuum, persisting over centuries, in the very heart of an urban centre: the virtual absence of geophysical anomalies, in this same zone, strongly reinforces this impression (Chapter 8 below, p. 360).

Once again, the overriding impression given by Classical Hyyettos is one of surprise at its apparently arrested growth, in contrast to the trajectories of other cities at this period, in Boeotia and elsewhere – as

already observed (p. 12 above). The rural sites, too, appear to reach their first, modest peak of extent and frequency during the broadly Classical / Hellenistic era, with continuing occupation at all those locations with potential Archaic antecedents (p. 11 above), and with several new ones added. Yet very few proved to be long-term establishments: one site, CN 9, is evidently on the brink of abandonment already before the Hellenistic period, several others survive in firm occupation only until mid-Hellenistic times (CN 5, 6, 7, 13 and probably 10 / 14), and most of the later survivors show detectable shrinkage (CN 2, 3, 11 / 12).

The destruction of Thebes by Alexander in 335 provided a likely opportunity for the expansion of several other Boeotian cities and, in the case of Hyyettos, a possible inspiration for the laying-out of the new town plan (above, p. 10). With his imposition of an entirely new constitution for the Boeotian League, and the onset of the Hellenistic era, we finally enter a phase in which there is reasonably good documentation for Hyyettos. This is largely thanks to the upsurge in epigraphical evidence (treated in Chapter 10 below). Pride of place goes to the long series of recruitment lists, carved on the stones of the southern Acropolis wall and running from about 250 or perhaps 230 BC down to, and after, the collapse of the last Boeotian League in 171; but there is also a substantial epigraphic record in other fields, which goes far to confirm the status of Hyyettos as an independent League member, with its own council, assembly, priests and other magistracies. Yet, as was conclusively demonstrated by Denis Knoepfler (2000; 2001), the operation of this Hellenistic Boeotian League, ostensibly egalitarian, was in reality subject to an explicit hierarchical division between, on the one hand, five major cities and on the other, the remaining eleven (later twelve). This is illustrated by the manner, and the periodicity, with which the most important offices in the League itself, seven in number, were filled. The five cities of Thebes, Thespiiai, Tanagra, Orchomenos and Plataia were each able to fill these federal offices annually, giving them permanent participation in League affairs; while the smaller cities, such as Hyyettos, shared the two additional offices between them and so were entitled only to intermittent representation.

This imbalance, discriminatory but perhaps realistic, is deepened by consideration of the question of coinage. The right to issue coinage, like so much else during the forty years of the previous League constitution, had been exclusive to Thebes. Under the new constitution, it was open to any Boeotian city, and at least seven of them took advantage of this to mint their own coins: but, so far, there is no proof that Hyyettos partook in these assertions of identity, a fact that could

have a possible connection with the origin of the ‘aspirated’ late Archaic coinage discussed earlier (pp. 7–9). The rare coins found by our own survey at Hyettos (see *Thespiiai* 375–6, ## 2 and 8, and below, Chapter 4, p. 188) are not local issues.

Reverting once again to the results of the survey, we find that the spread of the Hellenistic occupation of the city shows no signs of expansion beyond the Classical limits. One negative feature is the evident decline of the sanctuary identified just to the east of the centre (above, p. 13), where the strictly Classical material represents the latest really prominent phase: the explanation here may be that this feature obstructed the lay-out of the new town plan, so that worship was transferred to another locality. But as if in compensation, there are signs that the central ‘empty zone’, just to the northwest of here, is beginning to produce more material – a trend that will accentuate in Roman times, as part of a broader shift of the centre of gravity from the western to the eastern half of the Lower Town. Overall, the level of population at the city site seems perhaps to have declined slightly, but remained relatively stable from of the previous period, at least until Late Hellenistic times. But the rural pattern, whether on or away from the rural sites, suggests a different picture, with Site CN 9, as already noted (p. 13), being abandoned altogether, and a handful of others either reduced in size (including the important Site CN 3), or down-graded from permanent occupation. In the off-site rural finds, too, there is a marked decline in Hellenistic times.

For Boeotia in general, the period of the ‘Hellenistic League’ marked an undoubted improvement on the atmosphere of obligation, compulsion and intermittent violence that had characterized the period of Theban dominance. There are many signs of this: two of the most important are the widespread revitalization of neglected cults (Ganter 2019, 88–91) and the fact that, during the third century BC alone, a good half-dozen non-Boeotian cities applied successfully to join the League (Post 2019, 100–1), attesting to its revived prestige. For Hyettos, neither the epigraphic evidence, nor that of the city survey suggests anything more than a tolerable level of survival during these years. What was apparently a local security crisis in the mid-second century BC (*HB* 163–6; 244–5.; Chanotis 2008; below, Chapter 10, p. 391) found the city acknowledging the help of two outsiders, from Hypate, in liberating Hyettians who had been kidnapped in an episode of a ‘mob’ on the rampage, devastating its territory (including, significantly, its farms) and seizing people and property.

A clue as to one basis of economic survival at Hyettos is the reference to the city, as one of five Mediterranean sources for the reddish magnetite or

haematite ores for iron-working, in the *Natural History* of the Elder Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xxxvi, 128). Pliny explicitly gives as his source for this account the Greek geologist Sotakas, who had flourished in the later fourth century BC or a little after; so that exploitation should at least go back to Hellenistic times, and may even have played a role in the apparent early prominence of Hyettos, in an age when there would have been a surging demand for iron. The evidence for its continued operation into very recent times can be found all over the locality, from the ruined mine company house just west of the ancient site to the quarries running deep into the southern slope of the acropolis, or the effect on the magnetic signals recorded in the geophysical survey (Chapter 8, p. 351).

Thus, even with decline having set in already before the onset of Roman domination in 171 BC, Hyettos saw out the final years of Boeotian independence with a measure, however modest, of civic dignity. There is a brief, in the case of Hyettos almost poignant, coda to the story. Roman domination, as we know from other Boeotian cities, did not extend to prohibiting the recruitment of civic armies (cf. Christel Müller, *Thespiiai* 232), which in some cases persisted into the first century BC. In their examination of the sequence of chief federal magistrates or *archons*, derived from the recruitment lists inscribed at Hyettos, Étienne and Knoepfler concluded that the three latest catalogues (*IG* vii. 2828, 2831 and 2832), in which the name of the federal *archon* was left blank, date to the 160s BC – that is, to after the dissolution of the League, when in fact there no longer *were* any federal archons (*HB* 203; 243; 320–1; 342–7). So it was that Hyettos continued to inscribe its latest known enrolment lists, of just eleven, eight and two twenty-year-olds for the respective years (if indeed these do still reflect a system of complete and compulsory recruitment); it may be, too, that the blank stone prepared for use but never inscribed (*HB* 111, fig. 53; fig. 54 far right) belongs to this terminal period. A phrase used by Robin Osborne in describing the parallel process at Thespiiai, ‘playing soldiers’ (*Thespiiai* 229), again comes to mind, at least as forcefully, for the case of Hyettos.

In summing up the cultural history and standing of Hyettos, we find that after distinct signs of a *floruit* in early historical times, its development seems to have become somewhat arrested, perhaps atrophied, just when many of its neighbours were reaching the peak of their demographical and political development. This shrinkage is accompanied in time by something relatively new to the study of the ancient Classical world: the bioarchaeological evidence from nearby Akraiphia, where study of 293 skeletons has revealed signs of increased hardship and stress for

the city's population in Hellenistic, Roman and later times (Nikita *et al.*, 2019; Jongman, Jacobs *et al.*, 2019).

There are other indications too: in material terms, perhaps the most striking is the fact that, of the 1,621 separate architectural elements catalogued from the site, most of which must belong to the middle and later stages of Classical antiquity, not a single one is of marble. This was a particular surprise, coming as it did just after the very different picture encountered at Thespiiai. As a different and potentially tell-tale indicator, one could turn to the blocks originally classed as parts of oil-presses, but more probably bases for the dedication of tripods and other prestige objects (Chapter 9, pp. 372, 375–7). Most of them are so crudely carved and drilled that they are hard to recognize as being of the same form as the hundreds of parallel objects known from sanctuary dedications: they may nevertheless carry cultural implications, as potential supporting testimony to an intense revival of tripod dedications in the first half of the third century BC at the Ptoion sanctuary, not far away (Ganter 2019, 89–91). Of all the numerous drums and capitals from columns, just one is fluted; and among the standard building blocks, very few indeed – perhaps 2% – reach the dimensions expected of monumental buildings. The well-carved *stele* base # 1569 and the half-complete *trapetum mortarium* # 557 for pressing olives, are the nearest approaches to 'showpiece' exhibits recovered from the entire site. In numismatics, there is no *proof* of the existence of a Hyettian coinage, even in Hellenistic times.

If the overall material picture remains a discouraging one, the historical documentation hardly mitigates this, with the long silences in the records of the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries BC only relieved by the emergence of Hyettian epigraphy in the Hellenistic age. But this last is enough to demonstrate what is surely the crowning interest of the study of this site: that it shows the effective functioning, on a fairly small scale, of the Greek *polis* system, maintaining its vitality for some 400 years in the face of far more powerful neighbours.

This was far from being the end of the story: the robustness of the Hyettian capacity for survival first becomes visible in full Roman Imperial times, displayed in various ways: the persistence of the epigraphic record (Chapter 10 below), the wealth of ceramic evidence, which indeed shows a recovery in the Middle Roman phase (AD 200–400: Chapter 13 below) and, perhaps most striking in the archaeological record, the revelation by geophysical survey of substantial architectural remains, all probably of the same Roman era, at several of the rural farm sites (Chapter 4, Sites CN 6, 7 and 11). The 'after-life' of our sub-title was now under way: the community of Hyettos might have lost its independence, but not its vitality.

#### Note

1. 'nous n'avons pas ramassé sur l'acropole le moindre tessalon qui fût sûrement antérieur à l'époque archaïque...'

## Boeotia Project, Volume III: Hyettos

The urban and rural survey of the Greco-Roman town of Hyettos in Boeotia provides powerful insights into the rise and decline of a typical small city-state in a well-defined landscape. We follow village beginnings from Neolithic, early-farming times through the Bronze Age and into the dramatic appearance of the city in the Archaic era. Following an early Hellenistic climax the town and its countryside are transformed to a lesser agglomeration by the Imperial Roman period. After Late Antiquity and the final abandonment of the city, the survey reveals a return to a landscape of small rural communities, with a final reorganization into the present village network. Throughout, the volume combines archaeological surface ceramic survey with architectural study, geology and soil science, geophysics, geochemistry, aerial photography, and a steadily richer documentary record.

### Authors:

*John Bintliff* was Professor of Classical and Mediterranean Archaeology at Universiteit Leiden NL, and is now Honorary Professor in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.

*Emeri Farinetti* is an Associate Professor at Roma Tre University.

*Anthony Snodgrass* is Laurence Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology of the University of Cambridge.



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