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

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Chapter 3(c)

Interpreting the density and period map series: the final period maps

From the late 1980s onwards, we have made use of provisional, phase-by-phase distribution maps of pottery, though at first only the data from the Transects were available. Already from these, clear evidence emerged of radical changes, from period to period, in the areas intensively 'used' at Thespiai. The maps presented here, 'final' although minor corrections are always possible, preserve roughly the same trends in the shape and size of the city as when we published them in 1988 (Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988). The most prominent shifts remain as they were 20 years ago: a shrinkage from the late Archaic, Classical and Early Hellenistic town and a general gravitation of focus towards the centre and east in Early Roman times, with a continuation in Middle Roman. Now, however, we suggest that despite apparent expansion, the Late Roman era witnessed a slight further contraction.

Before this, for the millennia of prehistoric agriculture, nothing more than hamlet or village-level life can be suggested; after the end of the Late Antique city, again, there is a return to village life, with a clear (and, it now seems, double) focus of Medieval and post-Medieval times in a village to the east. The approximate size of the earlier Classical town now stands at around 57 ha (56.548), whilst the late Classical or Hellenistic enlargement created by the extended enceinte across the Kanavaris (around 40 ha) brings the enclosed area to about 96 ha (96.1343). Since, however, part of the newly fortified area is taken up by the steep slopes running up to the modern Thespies village, together with a small area within that hilltop settlement, and since it has become questionable how far domestic activity appropriated the gently rising ground within the new extension, between the Kanavaris stream to the south and the lower end of the escarpment to the north, the maximum built-up area must lie somewhere in between the two figures given above. In *Testing the Hinterland* (Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 2007), taking only the general concentrations of Classical sherds as a basis, we had reached a maximum figure for the urban area of Archaic to Hellenistic times at 95 ha. It seemed likely that detailed study of the finds could reduce this figure slightly: in fact we shall argue in this volume that the maximum extent of the built-up city of late Classical to Early Hellenistic date was around 72 ha.

A central issue remains the fate of the peripheral urban cemeteries, consequent on the changes in the size and location of the urban domestic sectors with the transition from the Greek to the Roman eras of occupation. With the shifts in the city's focus marking Early and Late Roman, especially when contraction in the built-up area occurred, we might indeed predict a parallel migration of the extramural burial areas. Yet it is also a possibility that traditional burial zones remained attractive for reasons of religion, sentiment or merely land-use. Božidar Slapšak was the first to propose that the boundaries between the Classical and early Hellenistic city and its extramural sector may have survived as symbolic zones, even after the withdrawal of dense settlement from large areas of the town in post-Classical times, and even assuming the total neglect of the original Classical city-wall, after its historically attested demolitions, and probably of its later extension too. To test this hypothesis, we need to identify several cases where plausible Classical and Hellenistic peripheral burial sectors can also be seen to attract those peripheral Roman to Late Roman concentrations that are argued to represent burials. This challenge, as we shall see, produces a positive result.

With the coming of Christianity, excavations throughout the later Roman world have shown that new attitudes to burials begin to prevail. It becomes permissible to continue to use pagan cemeteries, as well as burying in and around churches. Although these latter often lie near traditional burial areas, the

increasing tendency to locate them within the settlement will have encouraged the growth of associated cemeteries. For our Medieval and post-Medieval village, traditional funerary customs in Greece would suggest a graveyard associated with a church. The information from our two village foci is supportive, since the northern focus is associated with the small chapel of Agios Athanasios, whose origins seem to lie in an Early Christian foundation. The southern focus, thanks to the research by Božidar Slapšak, is now known to be linked with an Early Christian, then Middle Byzantine church. Test excavations in connection with repairs to the Athanasios church revealed extensive associated burials; but none were recorded in our own clearing of the southern Makri Ekklesia church, although a major late Antique cemetery is found immediately to its east.

After these preparatory words, we can turn to the renewed exercise of analysing the Thespiai nucleation period by period and, with the 'urban' phases from Archaic to Late Roman, looking in particular for the urban edge. The chief aim of this discussion is to see whether we can isolate the specific contribution *each* major period makes to the overall density map, and hence bring us closer, in each phase, to distinguishing the zones of active habitation from those of likely peripheral burial. The density and clustering of each phase, and its relation to the overall density map, provide the main period emphases.

The data collected from the two scales of observation are available separately, as Transect and Sample maps in Appendices 2–3. In each of these, the units shaded grey are those where, respectively, Transect or Sample collections were lacking. We shall present here, for reasons of space, only the series of 'Merged' maps, in which Transect and Sample data are combined. Although these maps are potentially misleading, in that only about half of Transects incorporate Sample finds as well, we consider that their value, in allowing us to gain an impression of all our data for a given phase, is enough to overcome this. In the 'Merged' maps, only those units are shown in grey where *neither* of the two methods of collection took place. As argued earlier, only at a certain size of sample can these different maps be used independently, as likely to be representative of the city in any particular period. Below this level, many phases are left with a quite different appearance, as between the separate collection techniques.

It should be explained that, when the various ceramic specialists recorded the finds collected from the city grid, they assigned chronological and other details to each piece. But to gain an overall picture of activity over the site by means of integrated maps, it is necessary to adopt broader dating categories. This means the loss of much finer detail, quite apart from the problem, typical of survey analysis, that a large proportion of the finds are assignable only to one of two (or more) successive periods, rather than to a single phase. The complete databases for the city grid pottery are also provided in the Appendices, with technical descriptions for each piece and the original, specific dating for it, and then a column called 'Date for Map', where pieces are grouped into more practical chronological phases, for the purpose of the maps that we shall shortly begin to analyse. In a minority of cases, our individual period ceramic specialists differed about the date of particular sherds: the numbers of sherds displayed on the period maps will not then correspond exactly with the period sherd totals that they give in their chapters. The entry in the 'Date for Map' column, the source used for the final period maps, was the result of adjudication by the editors as to the most likely attribution.

Each map was created by Emeri Farinetti, on the basis of a defined list of 'Briefdate' terms to be employed. Since, as we have seen, this necessarily required making simplifying assumptions. We also publish the full list of date labels used for each map, showing how those labels were converted into map symbols. Even so, the number of maps we have had to produce is extremely large: without such simplification of the data-bases, neither complete publication nor a manageable synthesis would be feasible.

A final point of note: a special additional survey was made of the Magoula hill, the core of the Neolithic site. As this was most comparable in intensity to the smaller-scale Sample collections, we have displayed the resultant finds as an inset box on the Merged maps to follow, and on the Sample maps in Appendix 1. They should thus be taken to supplement, not duplicate, the data on the respective 'Merged' maps and those in Tables 3.3–3.4 (p. 41).

The prehistoric sequence

Early Neolithic (and 'Early Neolithic?') (Fig. 3.41)
Early Neolithic is found only in the Magoula formal Samples; it was also noted in that locality by much earlier visitors (see Chapter 10, pp. 269, 279).

Our own finds of this period, however, all fall into the 'possible' rather than the 'definite' category.

Middle Neolithic (and 'Middle Neolithic?') (Fig. 3.42)
The Merged map shows finds clustering tightly within the Magoula core where the Samples were carried out, with a small collection from the handful of Transect units covering the wider Magoula hillock and its immediate surroundings.

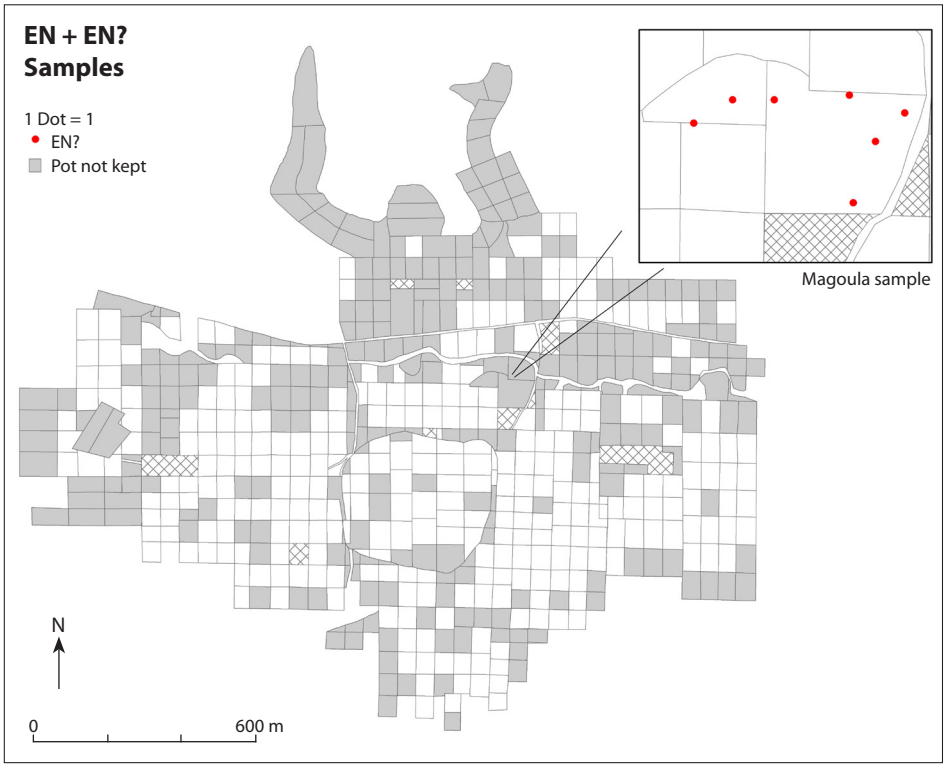


Figure 3.41. *Distribution of Early Neolithic (and 'Early Neolithic?') sherds.*

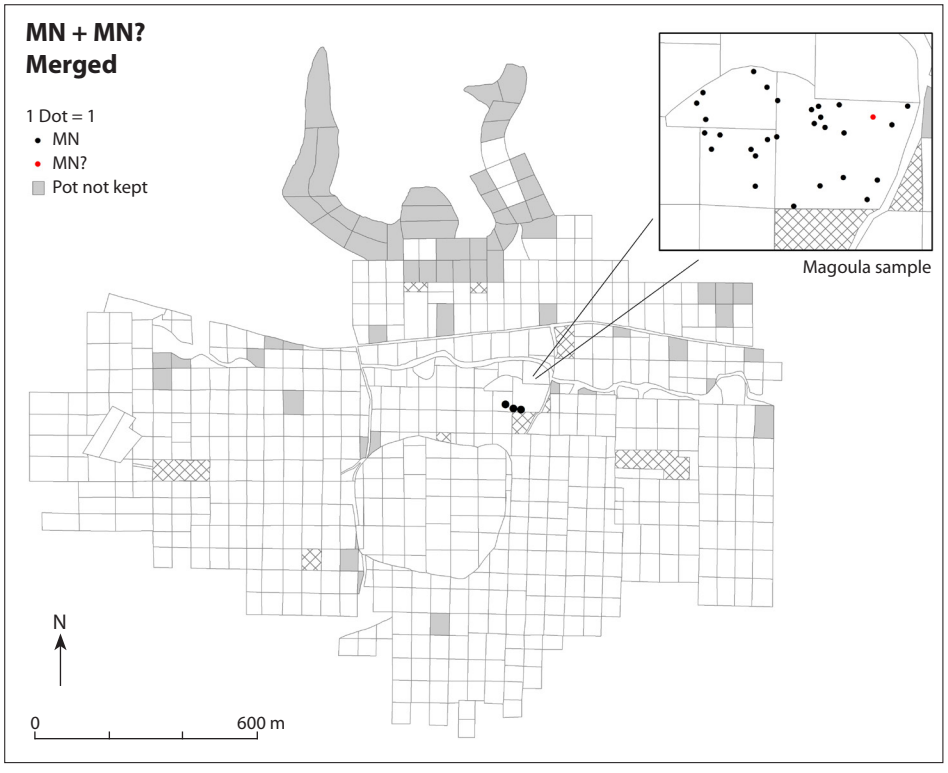


Figure 3.42. *Distribution of Middle Neolithic (and 'Middle Neolithic?') sherds.*

Late Neolithic (and 'Late Neolithic?') (Fig. 3.43)
Yet again, the finds are clustered almost entirely on to the Magoula hillock and its slopes. The picture resembles that of the Middle Neolithic. Three pieces of Middle to Late Neolithic date also occur on the Magoula hill and are not illustrated here.

Nonetheless, two definite LN pieces from the far west of the city introduce novelty, anticipating the distribution of the following phase, Final Neolithic, a development that we shall discuss under that period.

Final Neolithic and Final Neolithic/Early Helladic (and 'Final Neolithic?' plus 'Final Neolithic/Early Helladic?') (Fig. 3.44)
This map shows both the Final Neolithic pieces and also two rare sherds placed at the overlapping border between the successive phases of Final Neolithic and Early Helladic, many pieces from which are similar in style and fabric, but show a clearer break, for the group as a whole, from the preceding Early/Middle/Late Neolithic ceramics.

The Merged, summary map for FN, shows that the Magoula has remained a minor focus, but only alongside new foci in the far east, the far south and the outer west of the city, with another more diffuse spread to the north-east across the Kanavaris stream. The *Kastro* at the centre of the later site and its environs to the north and the east have thin finds, but there is an almost continuous scatter of individual pieces connecting all the foci. It is likely that this thin cover, from what later became the core of the Greco-Roman city, results from the fact that these zones produced the largest quantities of sherds of those latter periods, making it a lucky event when one of the rare prehistoric pieces, not always recognized as such by field-walkers, was picked up. Equally, it is suspicious that clusters in the south, west, east and north-east coincide with Greco-Roman cemetery zones, so that surface finds may have been disturbed by burial activities of historical date. Further, these cemetery areas probably had little historical settlement activity nearby to conceal prehistoric pottery.

As to the representative quality of these maps, we should state our provisional belief that they offer merely a small sample, qualitative rather than quantitative, of a much wider and commoner activity spread across the grid in Final Neolithic and Early Helladic times.

Neolithic (and 'Neolithic?') (Fig. 3.45)
This is merely a generic category, consisting of finds that cannot be more closely dated. The map again shows a dense clustering within the Magoula hillock and its slopes, but we have a wider yet very thin scatter of finds from the outer zones of the survey area. Given that this category can include anything from EN to FN, we note that the majority of the sherds are probably restricted to the EN–MN–LN range, when the Magoula was almost the exclusive source of finds. The continuous trickle in the outer, mostly western grid units would then be of FN date, perhaps with some LN contribution. The effect of these generic pieces is thus further to enhance the signal importance of the Magoula settlement – not so surprising when we consider that it may represent as much as 3500 years of continuous settlement. The poverty of inner city finds, as earlier noted, most likely reflects the swamping effect of the historical phases.

The Neolithic era: general discussion
The overall picture, for the greater part of the Neolithic era, is one of a distribution strikingly restricted to the locality of the Magoula, followed by a dramatic change in Final Neolithic and the early part of Early Helladic, when settlement appears to be dispersed widely over the city grid, while retaining a reduced presence at the original Magoula locality. Only a couple of LN or 'Neolithic' sherds indicate that there was earlier wider activity, on both sides of the Kanavaris stream.

K. Sarri however has pointed out to us (*pers. comm.*; see also Chapter 10) that a risk arises here from the differential diagnosticity of the material: MN and the early LN phases (LNIA) are normally only recognized when we have decorated sherds: its plain or coarse forms are much less well known. By contrast, the LN/FN to EHI material is almost always coarse, but well recognized because of its relative profusion in our area. Whether or not this issue would make much difference to the final result, it is a factor that we must take into account. It means, for instance, that MN coarse ware is probably being counted in with the generic Neolithic. Nevertheless, the generic map does nothing to contradict the period-specific Neolithic sherd distributions.

But there are yet other dangers in accepting this view uncritically. The Magoula hill appears to have fresh Neolithic levels very close to its surface, liable to disturbance by current land use, and as a result has always been a gold mine for visiting prehistorians. Either the locality was largely exempted from major use for much of antiquity (with the interesting exception of the Roman era) or, perhaps more likely, its original upper levels have been stripped away for agricultural purposes, its settlement deposits having been rich in minerals and potential chemical fertilizer. Although we shall see evidence, from the inset boxes showing the Magoula Sample in later eras (cf. above, p. 66), for continued deposition at the Magoula in most

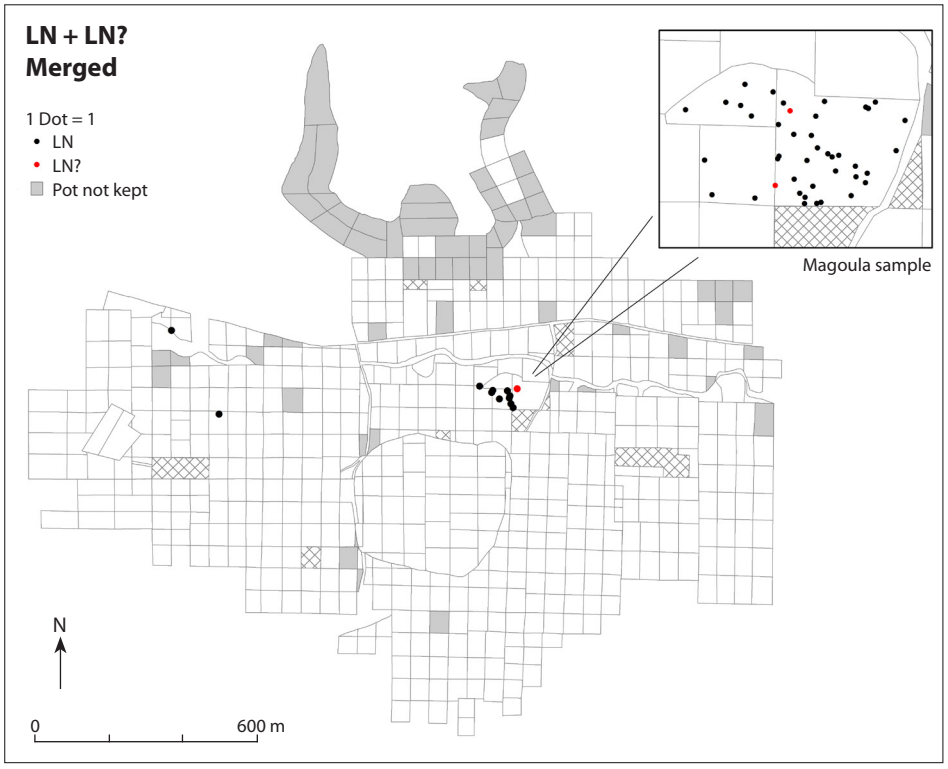


Figure 3.43. *Distribution of Late Neolithic (and 'Late Neolithic?') sherds.*

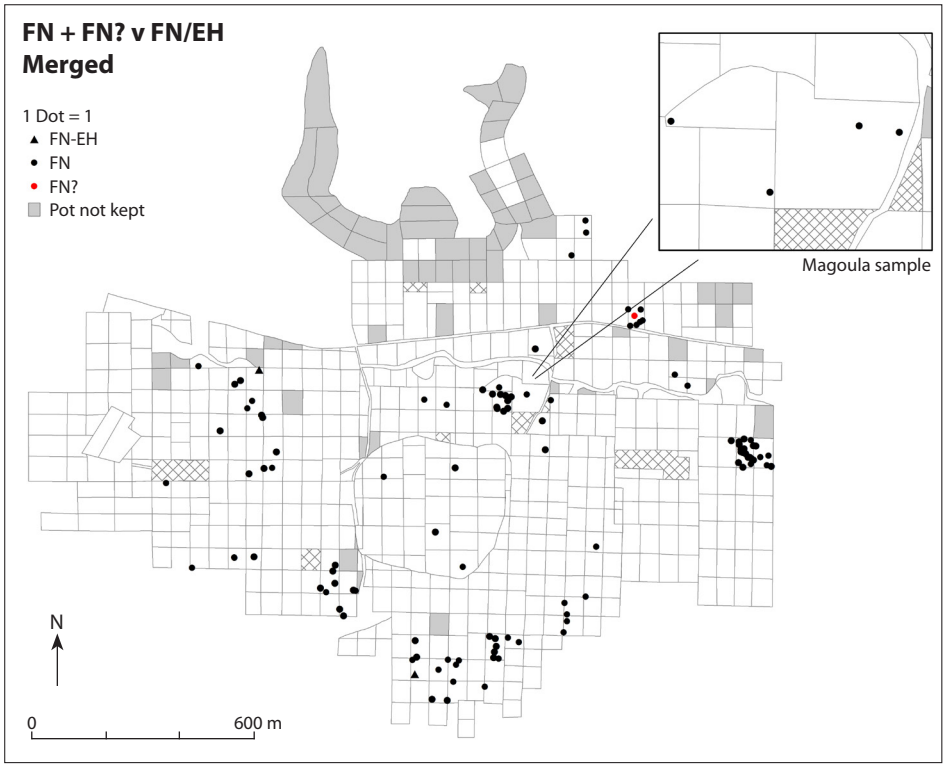


Figure 3.44. *Distribution of Final Neolithic, 'Final Neolithic?' and Final Neolithic/Early Helladic sherds.*

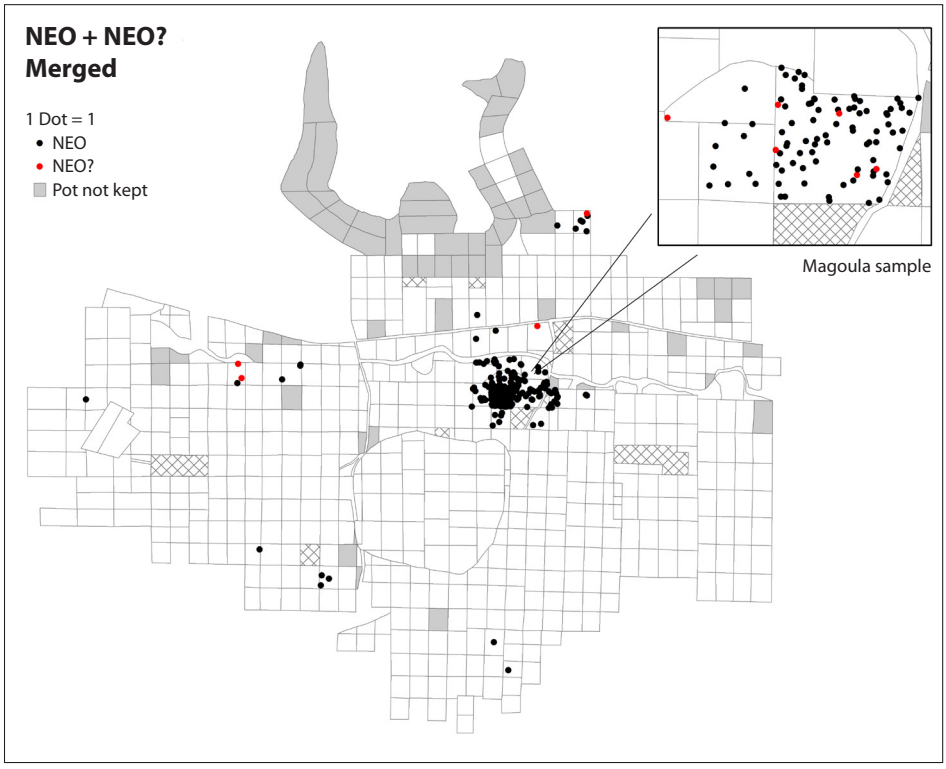


Figure 3.45. *Distribution of generic Neolithic (and 'Neolithic?') sherds.*

of them, it is never dense (except in Roman times). This factor has clearly enhanced the surface collection from these earliest phases. The widely observed phenomenon, whereby Roman-era constructions stripped away deeper, older levels for use in monuments, might also be considered to account for the puzzling poverty of finds here between the Neolithic and that period.

Let us take an alternative hypothesis: that there also existed other foci of Early to Late Neolithic activity elsewhere within the city grid. The density of post-prehistoric sherds, in nearly the whole of the rest of the grid, is such that small numbers of prehistoric sherds would be at risk of being missed altogether in the samples taken. We already published our thoughts on this notion in the 'Hidden Landscape' paper (Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 1999). Some support for this view, in the specific case of the city, can be found first in our analysis of the duplicated units in the north-west of the city grid (see pp. 48–51), where it was the less common periods – Prehistoric and Medieval – which came and went with the expansion and reduction of the numerical size of the samples collected. This pattern was reinforced by a total correlation, from the entire city data base, of prehistoric sherd recovery against sample size. On the evidence so far considered, then, absence or near-absence of pre-Final Neolithic in the wider City need not prove real absence of activity. The positive control, however, comes about through the comparison with the last phase of the full Neolithic, the Final Neolithic. Here, despite the equally low overall numbers, the clear existence for dispersal, even with the more limited data from the Samples, over a wide range away from the Magoula, seems to reveal a new pattern of landscape activity.

The view of Vitelli and Perlès (Perlès and Vitelli 1994, Perlès 2001) is that, for the earlier and greater part of the immensely long Neolithic era, pottery was made on rare occasions and designed primarily for the social context of eating, whereas in Late to Final Neolithic times, a more typical wide range of cooking and storage wares makes its appearance. The implication would be that the relatively numerous Neolithic sherds at the Magoula locality nevertheless represent what was later to become only a fraction of the domestic pottery assemblage. If we take this theory into account, the numbers from there will be further enhanced thereby. By contrast, the coarser nature of much of the subsequent Late to Final Neolithic and Bronze Age non-fine pottery will tend to reduce its capacity for survival in the plough-soil, as well as its likelihood of recognition. P.Sarri comments (see Chapter 10) that these wares are coarse but well-fired,

not so brittle as to be completely destroyed; yet that nonetheless their often small and fragmentary survival and nondescript appearance causes their presence to be missed (cf. Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 1999). If the foci of these later prehistoric periods were less nucleated, and shorter-lived, than the Magoula hamlet, their debris, at any given point in the landscape, will be that much less dense by comparison. We have already suggested that the Magoula may have been partially stripped of its later levels during intensive recent, and perhaps also ancient, land use of this prominent hillock: certainly the overburden of Greco-Roman finds seems unusually slight compared with almost all other parts of the city grid, enhancing the appearance of prehistoric activity at the Magoula, compared with that outside.

The longevity of a nucleated village, or at some times a hamlet, at the Magoula can readily be accounted for in terms of human ecology. It has been argued that early, pre-plough farming took the form primarily of hoe- based garden agriculture in well-watered soils (Sherratt 1980; Johnson 1996; Perlès 2001); live-stock numbers remained low and required limited grazing, until the local adoption of Secondary Products (milk, cheese, yoghurts, textile production) and of the ard plough. Recent research shows that this linked package of innovations was diffused or independently adopted at varied times during the Neolithic, Copper and Early Bronze Ages of Europe and the Mediterranean (cf. Evershed *et al.* 2008), but the Southern Aegean evidence points to the Final Neolithic–Early Bronze Age era as critical for its full-scale local implementation (Bintliff 2012, 50–2). The Magoula rises beside a very well-watered, if narrow, band of river soil where the perennial Kanavaris stream originates from underground springs, and we may assume that crops were grown in and around this environment. Clearance of surrounding woodland on the higher, rain-fed hills to the north and south of the Magoula might have been limited to the lower ground, with the higher water-table land for plant cultivation and limited grazing land beyond.

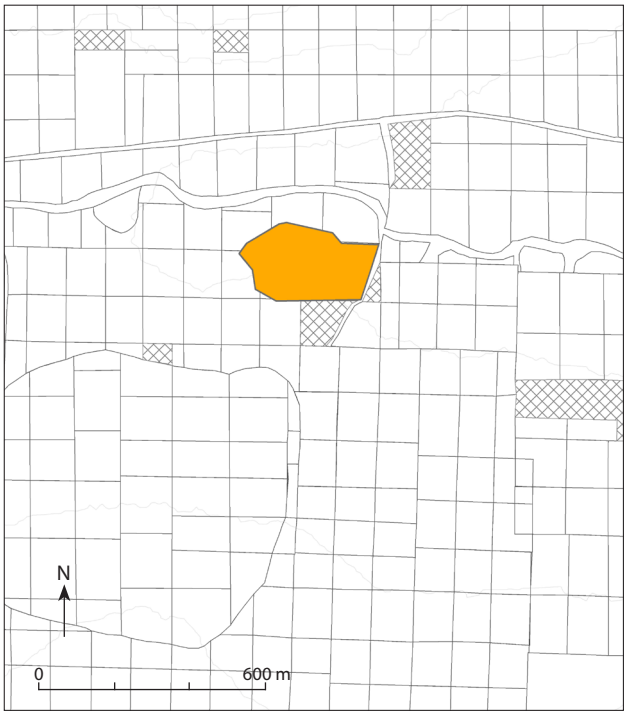


Figure 3.46. *Estimated extent of the Neolithic settlement on the Thespiai Magoula.*

We have roughly estimated the size of the Neolithic settlement, lying entirely within the yellow block in Fig. 3.46, at some 12,500 sq m, or no more than 1.25 ha. This small community, absolutely typical in size for Neolithic villages in Greece (Perlès 2001), represents at the most 100 people or so. The widely accepted model for Thessaly sees such small face-to-face communities exchanging partners, through exogamy, with five or six other regional villages (Bintliff 1999a; 2012, Ch.3). It has been suggested that in the conditions of southern mainland Greece, less favourable for early farming, a large demographic pool could also have been maintained by larger settlements which relied more on endogamy: a village such as Kouphovouno in Laconia, 4 ha in size, could be an example (Cavanagh and Mee 2007). We could therefore propose that the smaller Thespiai Magoula would have been in regular communication with neighbours, of which just one confirmed case has so far been found in the district – at our Site VM 4 in the Valley of the Muses. From another of our surveyed prehistoric villages, at Palaeokarandas – Askris Potamos, 2 km south of Thespiai (see *Testing the Hinterland*: 84–94), just one definite MN sherd and a second possible one of generic Neolithic date were recovered in a site of considerable size by Early Helladic times (*c*. 2.5 ha). The evidence may perhaps suggest another partner here, in a comparable location but in a different cardinal direction; this site too lies on moist river soils, this time beside the larger Askris river.

Early Helladic (and Early Helladic?) (= Early Bronze Age) (Fig. 3.47)

The overall distribution, seen in the Merged map, is comparable to the previous map for FN plus FN–EH in its wide scatter of finds, except that the distribution is thinner across the city as a whole, at the same time as being much stronger, once more, at the Magoula locality. There are roughly as many 'possible' as

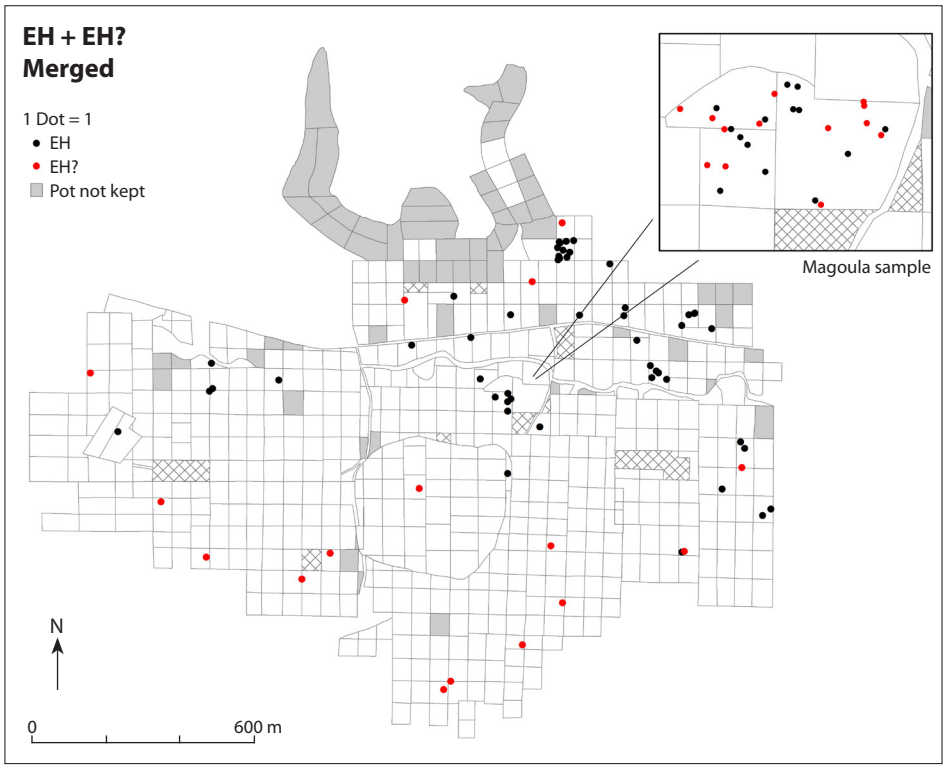


Figure 3.47. *Distribution of Early Helladic (and 'Early Helladic?') sherds.*

'definite' EH pieces, although the areas where this is critical, in the south and south-west, are both strong in FN. We should bear in mind that the duration of EH was around 1100 years, FN perhaps even longer, but that finds of EH I and EH III are far rarer on the Greek Mainland than those of EH II, which perhaps reflects in the first case a difficulty in recognition, in the second a period of genuine population decline (Bintliff 2012, Chapter 4). As the total find numbers for the two periods are not too different (when the 'possible' finds are included), we might hypothesize that the balance of nucleated versus dispersed activity for EH may have swung back significantly in favour of nucleation after FN times, without losing the appearance of widespread low level settlement and/or burial finds.

We have argued elsewhere (*Testing the Hinterland*: 130–1) that the FN and EH eras were characterized by a dual settlement system of regularly spaced villages or hamlets, with a dense pattern of shorter-lived farms around and between them. This view, deployed to explain the finds made in the countryside of the LSE/THS sector south of the city, may now be extended to cover the 180 ha of the city grid itself. The fact that Early Helladic material is in general better represented in the periphery than in the centre of the grid probably reflects its numerical swamping, in the city core, by finds from later periods. As noted above (pp. 48–51), experimentation with the total data-base shows that the apparent presence or absence of prehistoric material is not governed merely by the real original density of activity, but is also affected by the filter of the sample size of each collection in the city grid. What we gain from the Early Helladic and the closely related Final Neolithic/Early Helladic maps is the impression of wide dispersal compared to the previously very focused Magoula nucleation. This wider scatter may possibly include smaller settlement foci (family farms?) and larger foci (multiple-farm hamlets?). Given the likelihood that the numbers found are merely a tiny sample of the likely prehistoric sherds still present over the city grid, and an even smaller sample of those once present (for the logic behind this assertion, see the arguments in Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 1999), it remains difficult to estimate the true scale of settlement-size that these two sets of maps represent, apart from the apparent revival of the Magoula village.

As noted earlier, some 2.5 km south of the Magoula a further nucleated EH settlement was discovered, at the Palaeokarandas-Askris Potamos locality, reaching an area of around 2.5 ha. Moreover, between the Thespian Magoula and this southern village we discovered a series of small ceramic and

lithic foci with a mere handful of artefacts (as with the city finds), but again mostly FN to EH in date. These we have interpreted as representing dispersed farms and activity foci in the open landscape (*Testing the Hinterland*: 129–31). As such, they complement our reconstruction of the FN–EH landscape at the city site.

The 'sample fraction' (compare *Testing the Hinterland:* 37), that is the percentage of total recorded finds per unit that was actually collected, is very low within the city area. Emeri Farinetti calculates this as follows: the sample fraction statistic, using the total of the Transect, Sample and Magoula collected sherds against the expected presence of sherds, calculated on the basis of the visibility-corrected density values corrected for the area, comes to 0.2815 per cent of the estimated total present on the surface.

So, even were we to assume that prehistoric sherds survived as well as historical-period pottery, we could make a reasonable case for multiplying the recorded finds by about 350, in order to achieve a more realistic distribution. In fact, however, the survival of prehistoric sherds is adversely affected by the combination of several factors: their often coarse fabric, their taphonomic suppression through the massive overlay of historical levels, and the taphonomic under-representation brought about by the additional millennia of anthropogenic and natural weathering processes, to the point where the available pool of prehistoric finds is at a far lower level than the historical. The only factor which slightly adjusts the balance is the fact that the Final Neolithic/Early Helladic period as a whole covered some 2500 years, as long as the main historical occupation period of the city and of its village successor.

The main point that we can confidently establish is that the 'break-out' from the single, isolated hamlet at Thespiai Magoula, with its remarkable longevity, did not take place before the Final Neolithic at the earliest (the odd find from outside the Magoula excepted). This would then coincide with the Aegean impact of the ard plough, traction animals and the Secondary Products Revolution, which led to the centrifugal colonization of a wider landscape, away from previously favoured patches of wetlands and into the interfluves, in Sherratt's classic (1981) formulation. The Final Neolithic and Early Helladic expansion, into the dry-farmed Neogen and colluvial soils of the gentle slopes within the later city grid, is consistent in time and also congruent in space with events in the area immediately to the south of the city. Here, the higher hill-slopes and the Neogen plateau beyond, studied in *Testing the Hinterland*, witnessed dispersed, small-scale Final Neolithic to Early Helladic finds, interpreted as a combination of small farms and off-site agricultural activity. The equal interest in the dry-farmed colluvial soils, across the Kanavaris river to the north, is worth noting, as these are heavier than the Neogen *rendsina* soils which dominate south of the river.

The notes from the field- and pottery-books picked out a small focus of 'PRE- or PROTO-HISTORIC' finds in the western sector of the grid. This could possibly be linked with the Early Helladic focus now localized here, although a slight focus of Geometric to Archaic was also then noted as being present.

Middle Helladic (+ Middle Helladic?') (Fig. 3.48)

The 'EH–MH' finds, whether classed as transitional or more loosely generic, are confined to one piece near the Magoula, so we might add it to a discussion of the half-dozen or so purely MH pieces from that general area. K. Sarri comments that genuinely transitional EH/MH is very rare in Boeotia (as for example at both the major sites of Eutresis and Orchomenos, although it is better represented in Thebes). For MH proper, the Magoula area is poorly represented, as a minor cluster only, by comparison with two more numerous concentrations across the Kanavaris stream to the north. These three foci apart, there are just three definite or possible MH pieces from the remainder of the city area, very widely dispersed and all single finds.

The clear novelty lies in the two significant Middle Helladic clusters across the river to the north, one central and the other at the north-eastern extremity. Two further observations can be added to reinforce the north-eastern cluster of Middle Helladic: first, the generic 'Bronze Age' finds (see below) show a group here; secondly, the notes from field-walkers identified a 'Prehistoric' focus here.

In interpreting these finds, once again, we have to be wary of the sampling factors. If all prehistoric finds from the city site represent a mere fraction of the original assemblages, then a cluster still visible could in reality have been very dense. Elsewhere, collections of just one or two sherds lie within the difficult realm of small sample statistics: a single sherd could be a genuine 'loner', or one of a hundred that might potentially be recovered by applying a 'hoovering' technique to the same sample unit.

No unmistakable trend is revealed, but we believe that over time, from Early Helladic through the transitional era into Middle Helladic, a shift can be detected in which the widely dispersed landscape of farms and hamlets contracts into rather few and small nucleated settlement forms. These are not periods for which we have readily recognisable chronological sub-divisions in our material; but a working hypothesis would be that, around the beginning of Middle Helladic, the city site saw a nucleation into three closely spaced sites, one at the Magoula locality and

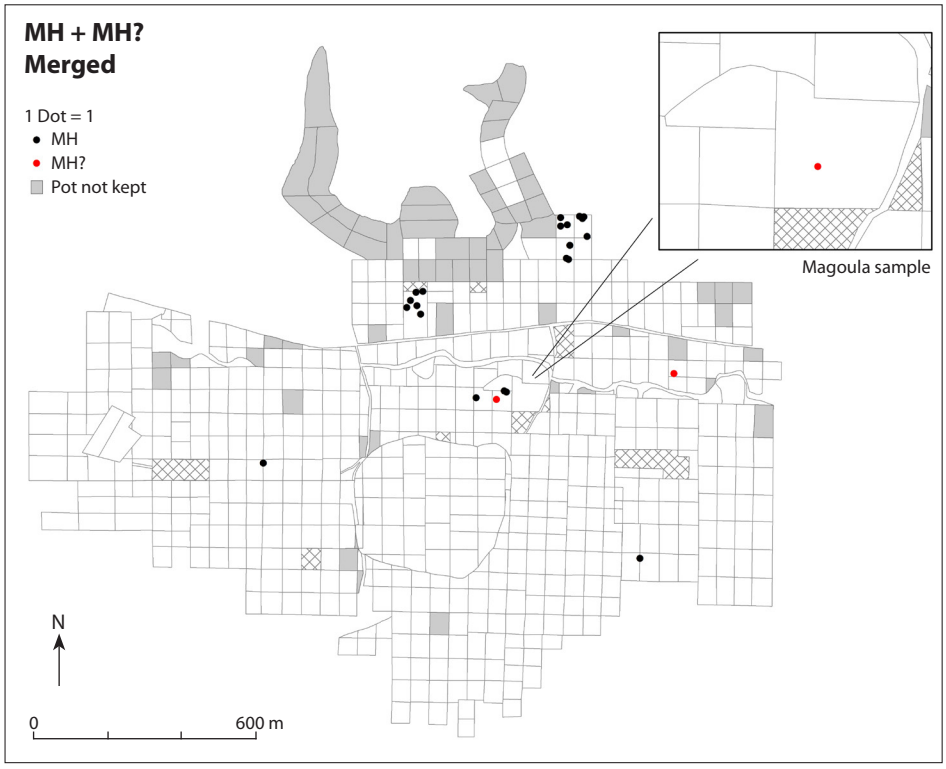


Figure 3.48. *Distribution of Middle Helladic (and 'Middle Helladic?') sherds.*

two across the river. They are spaced at an interval of some 200–300 m apart from each other, thus conforming to the formal definition of geographers for a multiple-hamlet system, that each unit remains in 'hailing distance' of its neighbour(s).

It might of course be that one or more of these clusters is a separate cemetery. But until near the end of Middle Helladic, graves on the Greek mainland tend to be located intramurally or close to settlement edges. The Magoula site had been a focus of occupation for millennia, and the north-eastern cluster had predecessors in FN, and far more clearly in EH times. The almost complete loss of the much more widely dispersed activity of those eras, and the apparent crystallization into a multiple-hamlet mode of settlement, do seem to mark a re-ordering of the landscape, a trend that may have begun before the end of EH. But, for consistency's sake, those few more isolated finds of Middle Helladic should still be classed as potential farms and/or burials, if on a very small scale.

These tentative conclusions once again agree well enough with the wider evidence gathered from the rural landscape of the LSE/THS sector to the south of the city. Here a dispersed Final Neolithic – Early Helladic settlement pattern, grouped around the known hamlet and village at the Magoula and Palaeokarandas respectively, largely vanishes in the Middle Helladic era, with a retraction into the Palaeokarandas village and the hamlets within the later Thespiai city, the Magoula included. Here too, however, there are limited traces of the continuing use of a few non-nucleated locations in the wider countryside, perhaps for farming or burial.

Thespiai may be comparable with multi-focal Middle Helladic settlements such as Argos (Pariente and Touchais 1998; Bintliff 2010a), and could represent a single community made up of several kinship groups. As a final warning: for a period of just 400–600 years' duration, when compared with the 2000 or more covered by the Final Neolithic and Early Helladic maps, a considerable reduction in the quantity of data, regardless of the number and size of settlements, is only to be predicted.

Late Helladic (+ Late Helladic?') (Fig. 3.49)

The transitional Middle–Late Helladic finds are so few in number as to make any analysis unreliable: here K. Sarri observes that this is a typical picture for this transitional period in settlements. But the single definite transitional piece from the earlier north-eastern cluster of Middle Helladic, followed by an absence of Late Helladic, is enough to suggest that this early

focus of activity lasted into the former era and was then abandoned. A possible transitional piece from the Magoula area is the only bridge between the relatively strong foci there in both Middle and Late Helladic.

With Late Helladic, however, there is a clear sense of change. The finds from the Magoula and its wider surroundings might be seen as a widely dispersed hamlet which, from analogy elsewhere, should include peripheral cemetery areas. While, on the one hand, there is a high proportion of merely 'possible' finds, on the other we must allow for the usual high level of bias against prehistoric finds on complex sites. On this last issue, it might be countered that sherds of the Middle and Late Helladic eras will be neither as coarse, nor as easily damaged by subsequent millennia of wear, as those of the later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age but we must allow for the following factors. First, any ceramics from 3000 years ago or earlier will, at least in the case of Thespiai, have been subjected to the damage and interference from the 1200 years or more during which a populous town occupied the same location; this will surely greatly reduce the chances of such pieces even lying on the current soil surface, let alone being recognized as worthy of collection. Painted wares are likely to have suffered partial or total loss of their decoration from such treatment. Secondly, since the pre-urban villages of Thespiai were far smaller than their Greco-Roman urban successor, their ceramic debris will, from the outset, have been relatively slight when compared to the vast quantities of the latter's waste material, and we have seen that our sample fraction is low enough to make any prehistoric phases highly susceptible to sampling errors whereby they elude collection.

In any case, the finds that were detected suggest that, apart from the Magoula focus, the previous north-central and north-eastern foci are not maintained: rather, we see a return to the wide scatter of single finds, but now with one small cluster in the far east of the map. On the next map, we attempt to give a possible extent for the Late Helladic hamlet (Fig. 3.50, the black outline). If we merely add up Transects with LH definite and possible finds in this area, their combined extent comes to 4 ha or thereabouts, with much additional ground between the find groups, so far, lacking in finds.

In theory such a wide area might have accommodated at most a few hundred inhabitants, but given the low density of finds this must be far less, and surely it would be too small to be considered a demographically self-sufficient settlement: it would have depended on networking with other nucleations

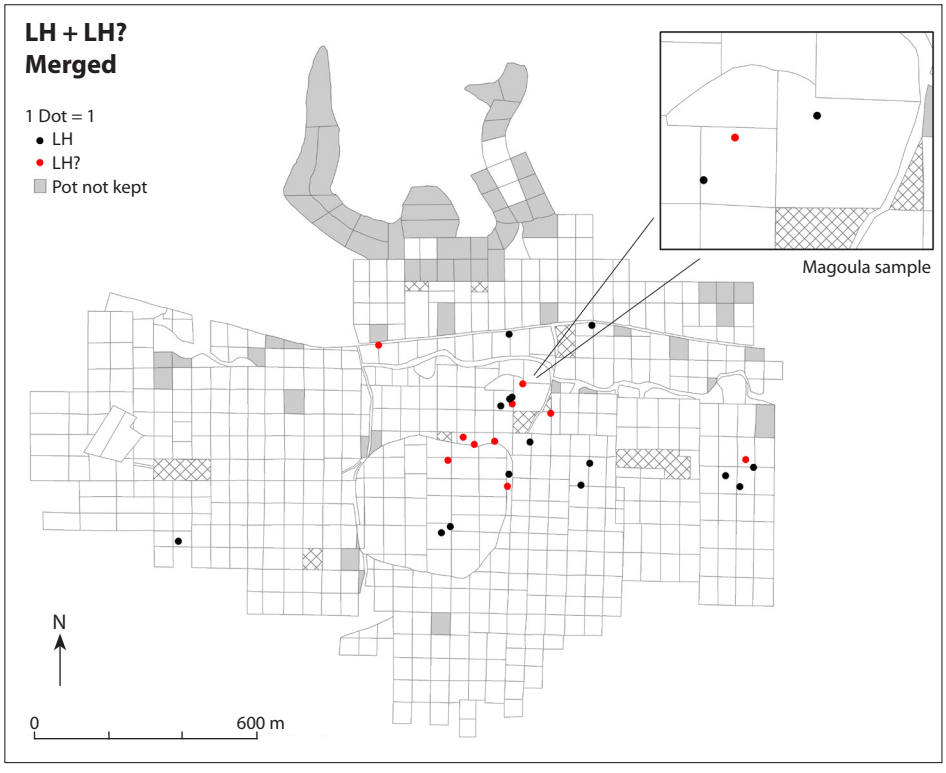


Figure 3.49. *Distribution of Late Helladic (and 'Late Helladic?') sherds.*

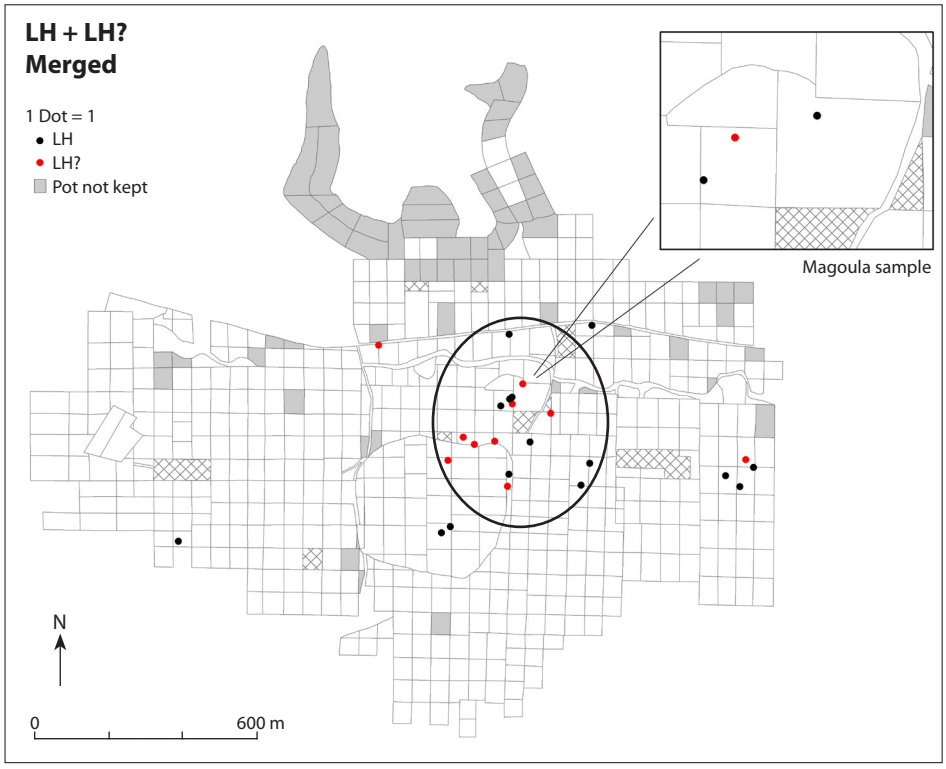


Figure 3.50. *Estimated extent of the Late Helladic hamlet.*

in the district, such as Site VM 4 in the Valley of the Muses and, perhaps, Haliartos and Eutresis further afield. In this, the era of Mycenaean civilization, the already long-standing settlement at Thespiai makes a curiously unimpressive showing: for a possible explanation in political terms see Chapter 5, pp. 199–200.

Yet again, the question of representativeness arises. The primacy of the Magoula locality, if we allow for the factor of the sample fraction (cf. p. 73), must be real enough. The absolute numbers of finds from the actual Magoula itself, however, as was already clear in the Middle Helladic distribution, are low, with stronger evidence coming from a wider zone round the rim of the hill and on both banks of the Kanavaris. While this could represent a genuine settlement form, it is perhaps more likely that this 'concave' pattern has arisen from the removal of the post-Early Helladic layers from the hill itself. Beyond that, the scattered isolates leave us with the usual alternatives of either taking this pattern at face value, or assuming a multiplier of several hundred at least for these finds, based on the ratio of collected sherds to total density. As a further warning, many grid units fall below the putative 'visibility threshold' or minimal size of sample needed to allow prehistoric sherds to have a good chance of being collected (see again p. 48).

Of course, the length of time for the transitional and Late Helladic periods is, in total, perhaps half that for the Early Helladic. At the same time, the spread of finds seems too wide for simple halo and off-site activity around the Magoula village; and it is anyway to be doubted whether manuring into the topsoil, during the Bronze Age, would allow good preservation of datable pieces (Bintliff, Howard and Snodgrass 1999). All this points to buried settlement and/or cemetery contexts for the Middle and Late Helladic sherds mapped. One could even suggest that the overall settlement pattern represents a very limited resumption of that combination of a degree of nucleation with a dispersal of satellite farms across the surrounding countryside, that had characterized the Final Neolithic/Early Helladic era.

Even if the duration of the Late Helladic era was only about two-fifths of that of Early Helladic, a simple comparison allowing for the different lengths of the periods will still show Early Helladic to advantage, as the era of the denser activity level, whether at the Magoula nucleus or in the wider city area. But the 'visibility threshold' argument, in particular, urges caution in accepting that this reflects the reality: it should be no more than a working hypothesis. We shall be in a stronger position to test this hypothesis

as our final publications spread spatially, around the several other districts of Boeotia that we have surveyed. We can however make a first comparison with the rural landscape immediately to the south of the city grid, the LSE-THS survey sector published in *Testing the Hinterland*. Here, in an area of 5.2 sq. km between Thespiai and the prehistoric nucleation of Palaeokarandas, we recorded very little Late Helladic and even less Middle Helladic activity, especially by contrast to Final Neolithic/Early Helladic; but not a total absence either. A possible model might consist of two hamlets, 2 km apart, Thespiai Magoula and Palaeokarandas (the latter seems to remain a significant nucleation in LH), with a thin scatter of satellite farms over the intervening countryside. The relatively sparse Late Helladic finds from the nucleus at Thespiai hardly seem to form an adequate basis for that enhancement which we would expect, if it represented the formalization of a significant political entity and its territory within the larger world of the Mycenaean palaces at Thebes and Orchomenos (compare pp. 75–6).

Fortunately, the monograph of our colleague Emeri Farinetti (Farinetti 2011) offers new insights into the spatial realities of Thespiai's relationship with known larger Mycenaean centres in Central Greece. From her calculations of 2.5- and 5-km walking catchments (employing GIS cost-distance analysis – Fig. 3.51), it is clear that the major LH site of Eutresis,

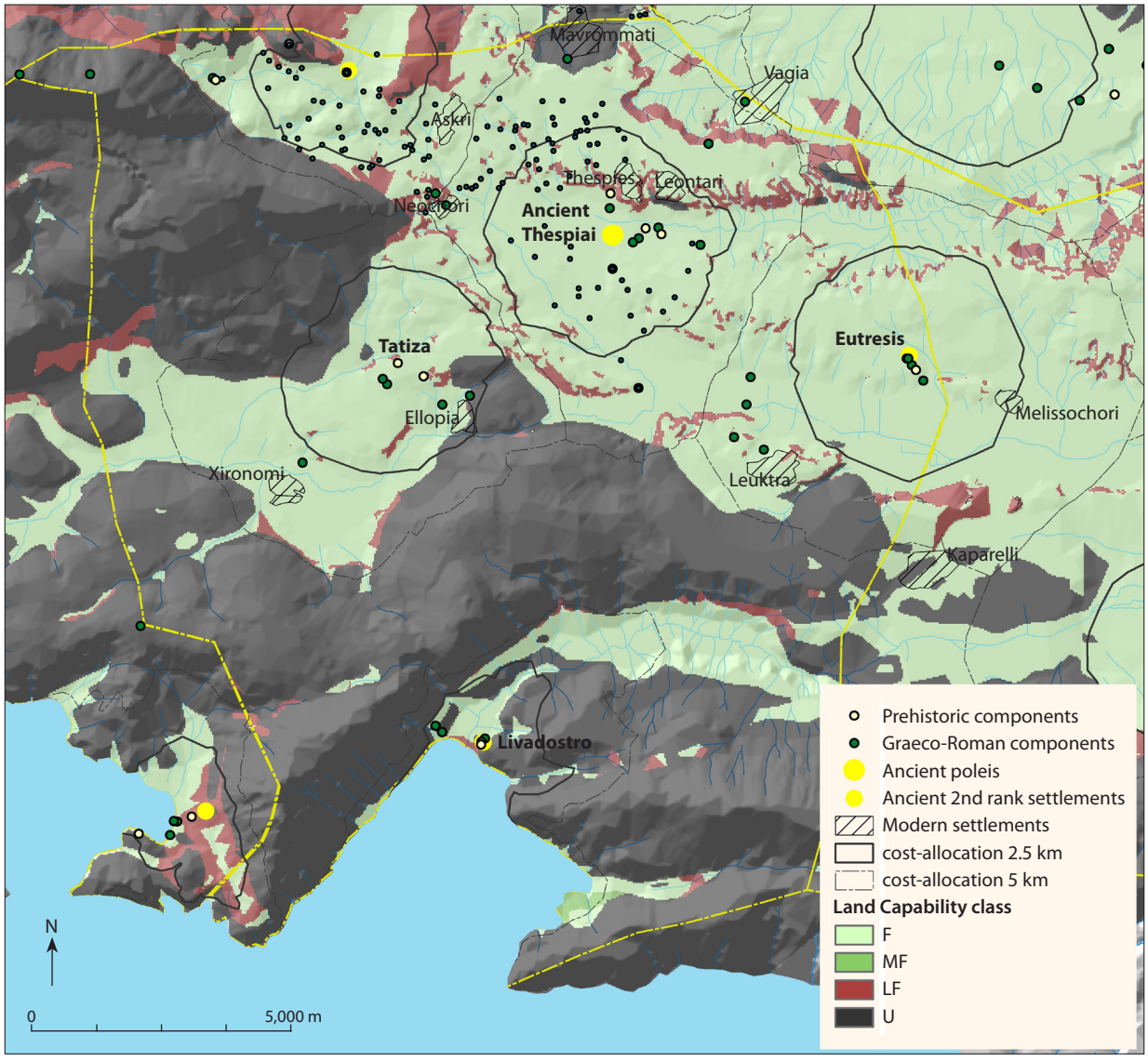


Figure 3.51. *Half-hour and one-hour walking distances, indicated by concentric polygons, around major sites in south-western Boeotia (Farinetti 2011: 164, Fig. 8).*

to the east of our city location, has a natural one-hour / 5-km radial border with Thespiai (a likely maximum for the exploitation of territory by an agriculturally focused community); the same will hold true for Haliartos to the north-west, which lies off this map. Thus within the settlement zone of Thespiai no significant LH centre is known; we have merely hamlets and farms. In this same distinct settlement district, apart from the small nucleus at Thespiai, there is the further minor nucleation at Palaeokarandas a mere 2 km to its south, and another small focus to the west at site VM4, just west of modern Askra village and some 6 km distant. The apparent subdivision of territory into smaller units here suits the small scale of the agglomerations. We can conclude that the rise of major palatial centres at Thebes – a settlement estimated at 33 ha – and, most probably, at Orchomenos, had no very intense impact, at least in positive terms, on the outlying rural landscapes, whether in stimulating population rise, settlement hierarchies, or a greater production of surplus agricultural products.

Moreover, even neighbouring Eutresis may mislead, by reason of its extensive Mycenaean defences. This secondary centre, with a circuit wall enclosing 21 ha, may have contained a far smaller zone of dense occupation (3.5 ha, after Goldman 1931: 68). If Goldman's assessment is correct, the fortifications must have been designed to shelter a dispersed regional population, rather than a single large community.

Bronze Age (and 'Bronze Age?') plus Bronze Age all (and 'Bronze Age all?')

The first map (Fig. 3.52) shows the generic Bronze Age sherds that were not definable within a narrower phase, the second (Fig. 3.53) combines these with all finds in the series of Bronze Age period maps just discussed. These maps reinforce a number of observations earlier made. In the 'generic' map, the Magoula locality is barely a focus, and there is a clearer emphasis on the small cluster in two grid units to the far north-east, best linked (according to our more precisely dated finds) with the Early Helladic and Middle Helladic periods. The very thin but widespread pieces elsewhere across the grid are probably mostly from the dispersed EH phase and, to a lesser degree, from the more limited scatters in LH beyond the Magoula locality.

The combined Bronze Age map underlines these trends with a far larger data-base. Perhaps the other important addition that the generic Bronze Age finds make to our picture, even if a good proportion of them can be given a plausible date, is to add some body to the thinner but more closely dated finds, so reinforcing

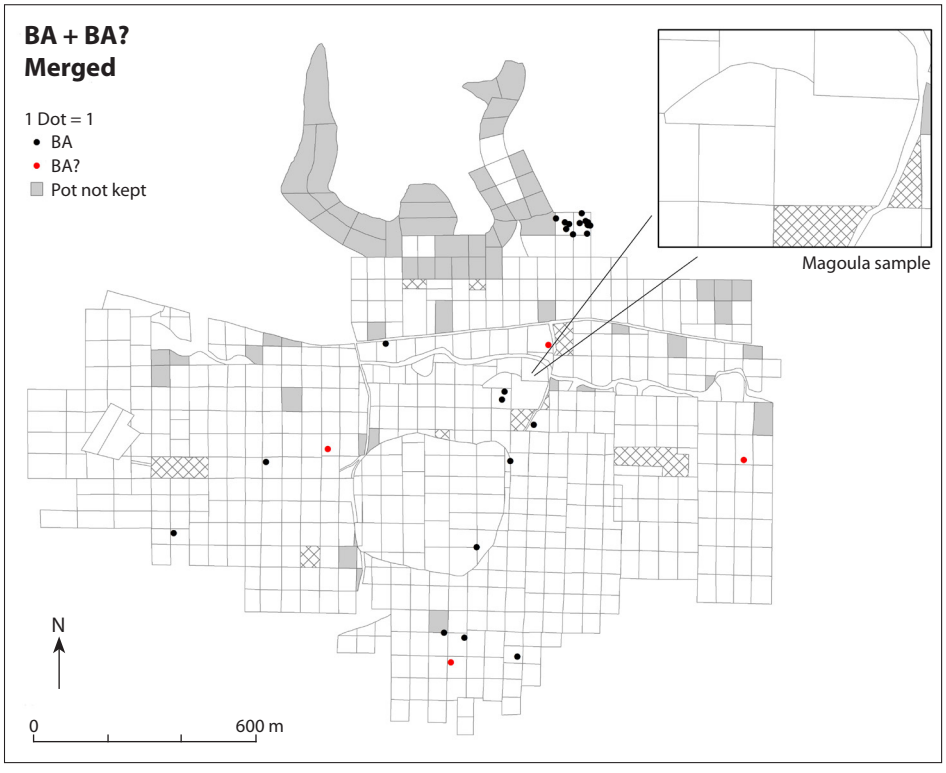


Figure 3.52. *Distribution of generic Bronze Age (and 'Bronze Age?') sherds.*

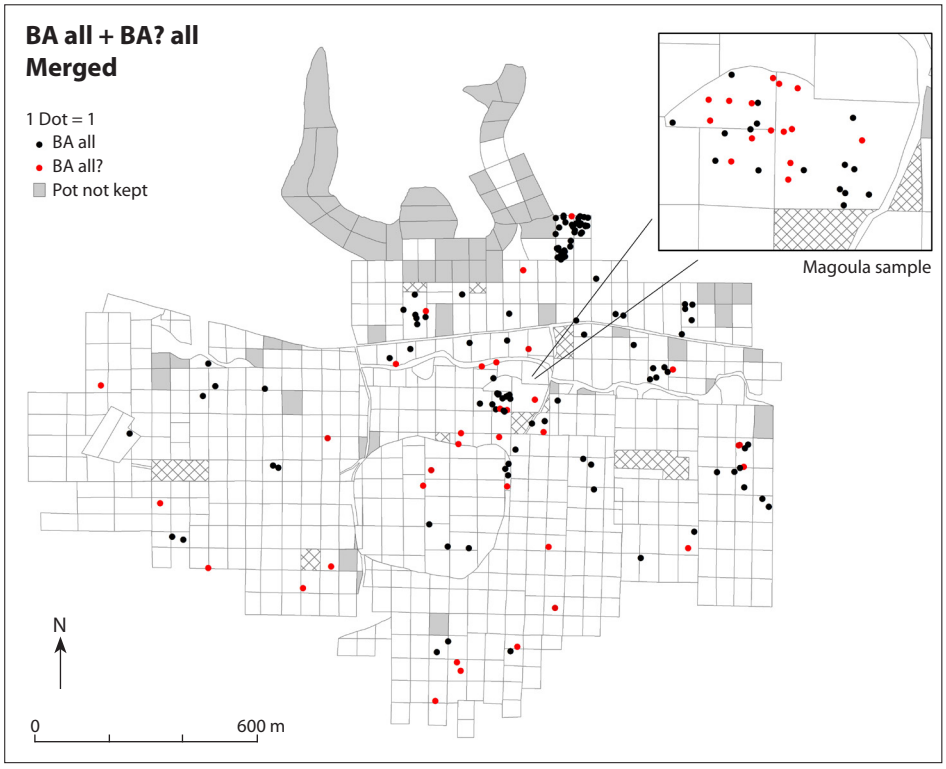


Figure 3.53. *Combined distribution of generic and more closely-dated Bronze Age sherds.*

the pattern of a 'taskscape' of dispersed prehistoric activity all across the later city area. The poverty of finds in the later city centre is, as always, considerably affected by the dense overlay of historical material.

Prehistoric (and 'Prehistoric?') plus Prehistoric all (and 'Prehistoric? all')

The generic 'Prehistoric' sherds (those that could not be more closely dated) show a wide spread (Fig. 3.54), but the dominance of the Magoula is clear-cut with, in second place, the focus in the north-east of the map. The Magoula finds must be primarily Neolithic, with lesser contributions from the Bronze Age, especially the EH; the northern cluster we have seen to be mostly created in EH and MH times. The remaining scatters seem essentially FN, with lesser contributions from EH and LH. Once again, the generic Prehistoric gives valuable reinforcement to the trends seen in the plots of the sub-phases, in terms of both pattern and numerical representation.

The combined generic and specific Prehistory sherd map (Fig. 3.55) is, equally clearly, a summation of all the trends we have seen in the generic and period-based Bronze Age and the generic Prehistoric find distributions. Even the inclusion of the scatters of all prehistoric finds from the city centre area merely reflects their rare and random survival, amid the massed sherds of historical date.

Lithics (Fig. 3.56)

This category consists essentially of small tools and processing chips in obsidian and chert, which must be largely of Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age date. The pattern suggests a natural concentration at the Magoula, deriving from the dominant Neolithic settlement, and the far more dispersed scatter from the Bronze Age eras. Given the absence of any concentrations outside of the Magoula area, one is tempted to date most of the recovered lithics in the wider city area to the FN and EH eras too, although stone tools were still in less prominent use throughout the MH and LH periods. But the extreme difficulty that many field-walkers have in seeing stone tools should warn us against expecting too much, from surface finds dominated by astonishing quantities of ceramics. The rich Neolithic surface of the Magoula, with low-level historical overlays to cope with, made the recognition of lithics there a far easier task.

The prehistoric periods: summary

The general picture offers three successive modes of activity within the site of the later city. First, for an

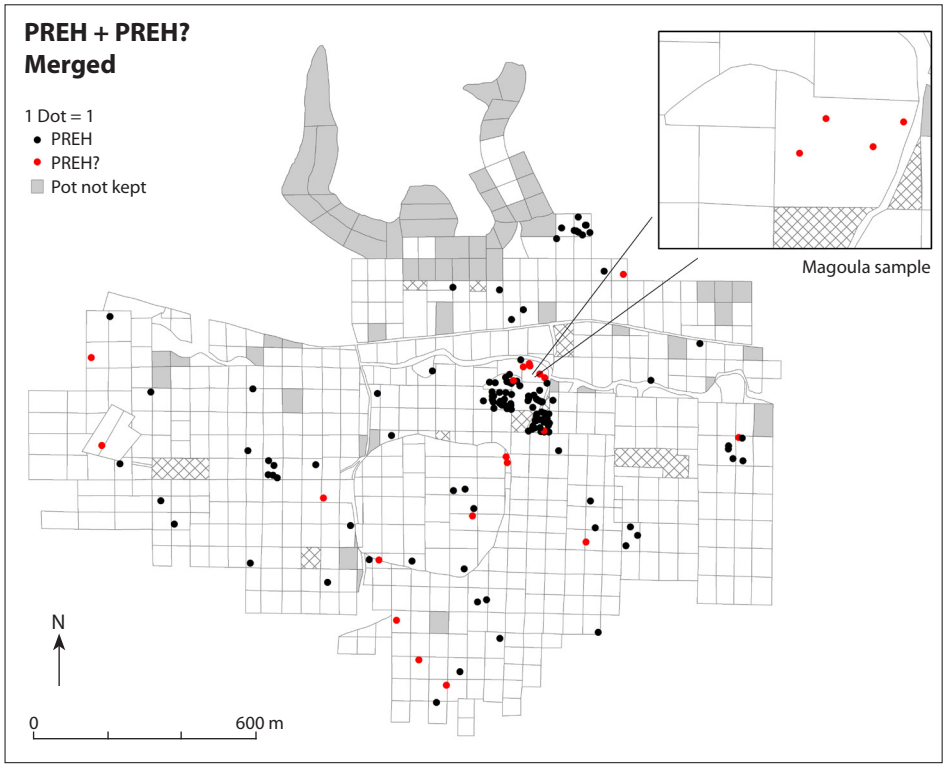


Figure 3.54. *Distribution of generic Prehistoric sherds.*

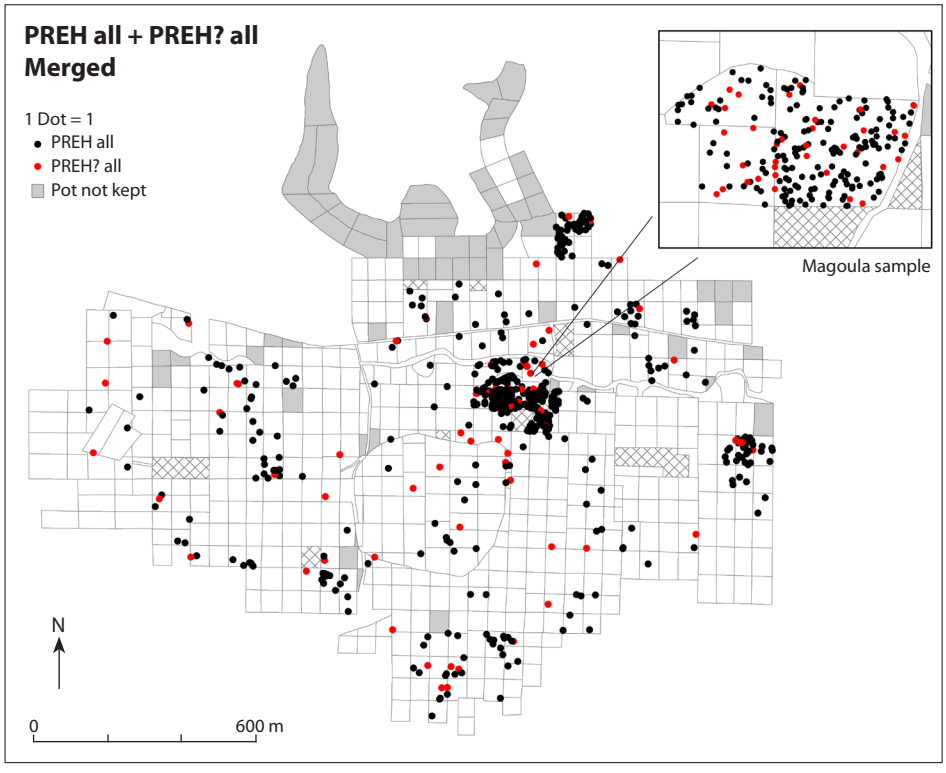


Figure 3.55. *Combined distribution of generic and more closely-dated Prehistoric sherds.*

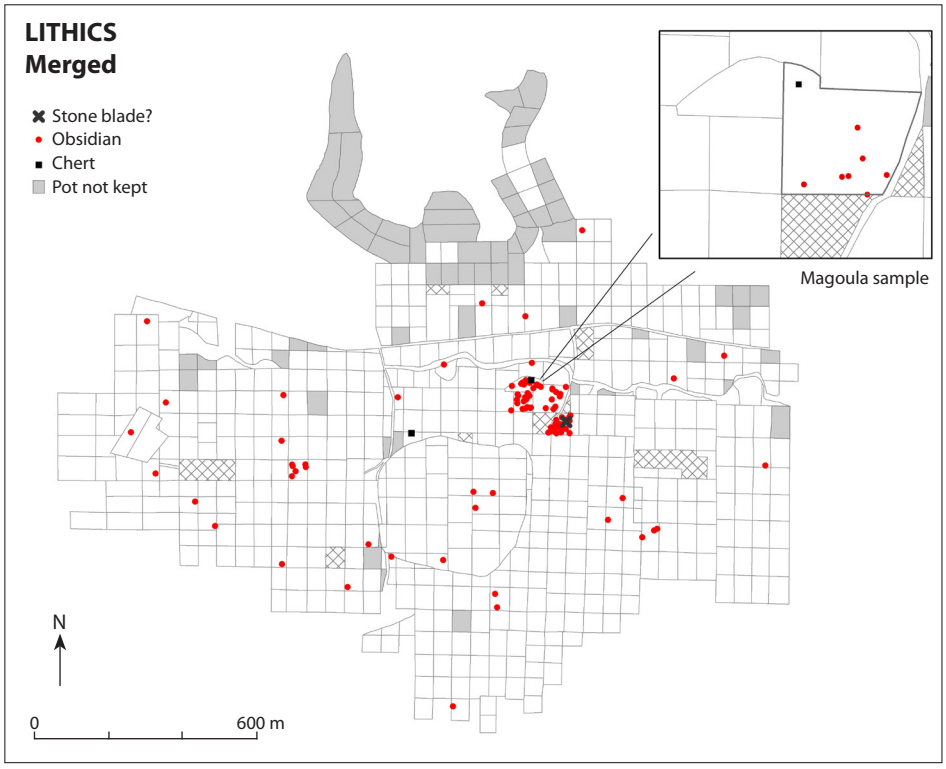


Figure 3.56. *Distribution of lithic finds: obsidian and chert.*

extremely long period (the span from Early to Late Neolithic potentially covers 2000 years), the Magoula hillock contains a nucleated hamlet with rich ceramic deposits. The area of dense finds, confined to some 1.25 ha, conforms to the small dimensions of typical Balkan Neolithic tells and suggests that the inhabitants would have numbered no more than a couple of hundred people at the most and probably less (Perlès 2001). Inter-marriage with other contemporary villages and hamlets would have been necessary for demographic health and survival. By comparison with Thessaly, where villages were rather close to each other, further south in mainland Greece they appear to have lain further apart (compare Bintliff 2012, Chapter 3): our local evidence conforms to this pattern, with Site VM 4, lying some 6 km to the west in the Valley of the Muses, forming the nearest contemporary site so far confirmed. This pairing, incidentally, closely parallels and anticipates the later, long-term pairing of a village in the Valley and a town at Thespiai.

In the Final Neolithic and Early Helladic eras, the explosion of dispersed human activity over the entire area of the city survey can be linked to the similarly widely dispersed and contemporary deposition of finds recorded in the LSE/THS survey district, the immediately adjacent countryside to its south. Although the Magoula may have remained a small settlement in FN and grown back to a hamlet in EH, we have interpreted the wider scatter as reflecting shifting farmsteads and graves, over a period of possibly 2500 years.

In Middle to Late Helladic times, a pronounced tendency to settlement nucleation is detected, with several focal localities within the city survey grid: in both Middle and Late Helladic, the general vicinity of the Magoula forms one of these; for Late Helladic the pattern perhaps suggests a single dispersed hamlet in the wider Magoula sector, with lesser activity or settlement foci in the overall city grid. The emphasis on kin-groups within larger nucleated communities, found more widely in Middle Helladic Greece and detected in tumulus burial groups and in other cases of multi-focal settlements (most notably Argos), invites comparison with the hypothetical pattern for Thespiai. This deserves further investigation, especially since such horizontal differentiation appears to be a factor in the ensuing growth of a vertical social differentiation, with the emergence of leading families in the final Middle Helladic and earlier Late Helladic phases (Wiersma 2013). Yet our clusters seem more appropriate to distinct family groupings and no more. Nonetheless, slight Middle Helladic traces elsewhere on the grid, and a clearer dispersal of Late Helladic

finds, are interpreted here as likely evidence for a few rural farms in the former period and a stronger revival of satellite farmsteads in the latter.

To translate these tenuous finds into relative population estimates would be unjustified: the most that could be said is that the relatively short duration of the Late Helladic phase, taken together with the distribution of its material around the Magoula, barely hints at a Mycenaean hamlet no larger than its Neolithic and Bronze Age predecessors: so far, none of our estimates exceed a couple of hundred inhabitants, at the most, for any prehistoric phase. For the Final Neolithic/Early Helladic period, the density of contemporary satellite farms is especially difficult to calibrate, given the period's immense length and the likelihood that much of the generic 'Bronze Age' and 'Prehistoric' material should be added to that formally dated to this era. The multiple hamlets and fewer rural sites of the Middle Helladic era point to a smaller total population than that of Late Helladic, with its evidently more focused central hamlet, together with a minor re-expansion in rural activity, but the differences are slight. Once again, such a pattern would agree with that of the LSE/THS sector to the south.

Given the relatively slight distances involved in movement within the city grid, the 'friction of distance' factor, according to which rural farms might have been found more profitable than village residence, can hardly lie behind the expansions and contractions of activity traces. If the Neolithic restriction to the Magoula went together with a form of early hoe-farming, concentrated on 'garden-culture' in and around the Kanavaris valley, the subsequent Final Neolithic/Early Helladic expansion, into the entire surrounding landscape, nevertheless calls for more than merely eco-technological explanations. The local adoption of traction-drawn ard ploughs, ox-carts and the secondary products of herd animals, must admittedly be a prime reason for the visible taking in of a wider landscape, much of which was at that time suitable only for dry farming. Yet the Magoula remained a mere 10 to 15 minutes' walk from the outermost edges of the city grid; so that attitudes to land-holding may, we think, have been equally relevant to the suspected change in settlement and land-use. According to the generally accepted interpretation of the dispersed pattern of small settlements in the Early Bronze Age, seen equally in Crete, the Cyclades and the Greek mainland, it was dominated by apparently relatively short-lived farms of family size, in use for generations rather than centuries. Families then moved on to a different area, cultivating fresh or previously fallowed land to obtain higher yields. Such a system would imply plentiful availability of land and an absence of fixed-plot ownership. A social elite, if one existed in this era, would exercise its control over labour and surplus rather than land, since the former was a limited resource, the latter not. We are led the conclusion that populations would have been low, relative to carrying capacity.

The returning emphasis on nucleation in Middle and Late Helladic takes two forms. In Middle Helladic, the several foci could perhaps represent either kinship groups, or families clustered around a small-scale leader on the model of the 'Big Man': multiple burials within a tumulus elsewhere have been seen as an argument for the latter alternative. But there is continuing debate amongst prehistorians as to whether the MH era on the Greek mainland was characterized by any form of social stratification (at least until the latter part of the period, with the development of complex tumuli, *tholoi* and Shaft Graves; cf. Bintliff 2012, Chapter 6). Sporadic rural finds may indicate that hamlet settlement did not exclude the adoption of occasional farmsteads nearby. An alternative interpretation, for both Middle and Late Helladic, could be that such finds mark rural burials, on land cultivated by inhabitants of the nucleated settlements, but this is harder to equate with the excavated evidence indicating intramural, or communal extra-mural, burial as the norms in both eras. We would therefore tend to assign these scattered rural finds either simply to farms, or to farms plus family graves.

The slightly larger spread of finds for the Late Helladic hamlet, with its equally slightly enhanced satellite activity, is unlikely to represent the smallest form of spatially defined 'community' that is recognized and exploited in the contemporary palatial archives: defined groups of people in specific locations, with duties but also with private economic roles (Halstead 1992). Nonetheless, by this stage some concept of private and public land holding could, we suggest, have existed, even in such small settlements. The available ceramic evidence can hardly represent a community so enlarged as to require intensive cultivation of all the land available, on every side, between itself and the next nucleated site (in each case several kilometres distant, as our wider survey suggests). Rather than land-shortage, therefore, we believe that it was some socio-legal régime of this type that operated in favour of a primarily nucleated residence for the farmers of the area.

The relatively short duration of the Middle and Late Helladic periods combined – probably less than 1000 years – and the scarcity of finds from these periods, make a direct comparison with those of the preceding phases, as an indication of population

Table 3.6. *Breakdown of find numbers, per Sector, of the four generic phases.*

Merged	PREH	PG to HELL	Hell–R to MR	R–LR and LR	MED to Post-MED
Sector 1	30	529	211	186	88
Sector 2	43	550	326	383	108
Sector 3	24	268	271	142	57
Sector 4	593	189	311	453	57
Sector 5	22	179	619	1392	67
Sector 6	3	111	64	119	10
Sector 7	39	315	138	187	48
Sector 8	72	289	169	171	220
Sector 9	70	305	636	965	413
Sector 10	41	166	39	66	225

dynamics, hard to achieve. The dispersed settlement of the Early Helladic era itself, if we are correct in postulating for it many small, short-lived settlements, is equally hard to evaluate. It is therefore worth while returning, for a closer look, to the issue of sampling at the city site. Table 3.6 repeats the findings of the Sector Analysis (see pp. 44–8) for the varying percentages, per Sector, of the four main clusters of periods across the surveyed city area.

A clear trend is visible. Sector 4 shows a major anomaly of high prehistoric finds that is almost entirely due to the material from the Magoula locality. The remaining nine sectors fall into two contrasting classes, in respect of their representation of prehistoric material: the sectors closest to the Magoula have the most density of prehistoric finds, by comparison with that of the outer zones, the elevated Sectors being in order 4, 8, 9 then 2, 7 and 10. Despite the highest density of later occupation in the inner zones, this might suggest that activity was especially connected to the original settlement core at the Magoula.

We have already (pp. 48–51) presented the evidence from the small number of grid units surveyed twice in successive years, showing the effect exercised by sample size on the representation of prehistoric and other less common periods, with fuller collection favouring the discovery of more prehistoric finds. Comparison of the two years showed the total count of sherds, collected from the five grid units together, changing from 42 to 239, a factor of difference of 5.7. Still more decisive was the jump in the representation and subsequent recognition of prehistoric material: from zero to 31 sherds! We also found that, simultaneously and quite independently, a different factor may also be in operation, with its own filtering effect: once the global density of finds from the dominant periods rises above certain absolute levels, it significantly reduces the collection of lesser periods. On these data, if for the sake of argument we were to assume that prehistoric finds were roughly equally spread across the city grid (always excepting the special locality in Sector 4), then a location within the core of the later city, as opposed to the extramural sectors, will have cut the 'visibility' of prehistoric sherds by over 50 per cent.

Putting all this together, we would argue that the size of a sample collection of sherds, on a multi-period site, is one critical filter in the recognition of lesser periods. Not that this is a geometrical progression: it is simply that small samples may miss such periods altogether. But to this a further filter can now be added: this is, that the enormous rise in the density of sherds, as we enter the core area of an ancient city, changes the underlying balance of finds of different periods from that observable in the immediate extramural zones, so that the chances of lesser periods being picked up are systematically reduced. When one studies the occurrence of prehistoric finds on many medium to large Greco-Roman settlements, it is a common observation that their distribution gives a sporadic, apparently almost arbitrary impression, apart from the occasional rich locality which has either survived later burial, or been more recently revealed through the stripping of surface soil. At Thespiai, the prehistoric richness of the Magoula locality is probably the result of the operation of both factors.

It is probably not going too far, however, to propose that the total population of the locality of the later city of Thespiai was never, at any point in farming prehistory, on a scale greater than that of a village. This would imply that, even in times when 'central places' or perhaps state centres existed within Boeotia as a whole, Thespiai was not one of them: rather, it would have been a rural satellite to larger sites in this part of west-central Boeotia. It is interesting that other towns since studied in the course our Project, namely Tanagra and Koroneia, have a similar disjunction between a prehistoric existence as a rural village or hamlet, lying between major contemporary settlements, and a later rise to the status of a city-state, beginning from the borderline of history in Late Geometric to Archaic times.

Elsewhere in the wider surveyed areas beyond the city grid, we have a possibly larger Bronze Age hamlet 2 km to the south (at Palaeokarandas); another sizeable settlement some 6–7 km to the west (at Askra in Early Helladic, then in Middle and Late Helladic times at nearby Site VM 4); and finally a major Bronze Age site at the later city of Haliartos, almost 10 km

to the north-west. Beyond our research zone, the well-known prehistoric site of Eutresis lies 7 km to the south-east. The leading question is how far, if at all, these neighbouring nucleations could be seen as exercising political power over the Thespiai village communities.

Current discussions of settlement hierarchies in Early Bronze Age Greece include Thebes as a central place; but, at well over 15 km from Thespiai, Thebes is rather too distant to be seen as a centre able to control, in Early Helladic times, such a large territory as that would imply. For Middle Helladic times, there is less ground for belief in regional centres. Only in the mature Mycenaean era might rural Thespiai be expected to fall under the control of a palatial centre. As argued in Chapter 5, the available evidence suggests that the locality of Thespiai may have belonged to the territory of the palace of Thebes at this period. That local affairs at the hamlet/village level were mediated through a secondary, non-palatial centre such as Eutresis or Haliartos seems a possibility.

The flourishing of Mycenaean civilization in the Late Helladic III phase depended on a general expansion of population in the landscape, if one generally focused on towns, nucleated hamlets and villages rather than, as in the Early Helladic, in farm sites. The city survey area and the landscape around it conform to this model in at least one respect, with nucleated foci round the Magoula on the city site, at Palaeokarandas 2 km to its south, and at Site VM 4 and Haliartos to the west and north-west respectively. But in the intervening countryside there are few examples of other, lesser foci of activity, assumed to be farms, together with the even rarer sites of presumed military or religious function, for example on the exposed Pyrgaki hill above Askra. There is in fact no evidence, from the dangerously small city survey sample, that activity in Late Helladic showed a genuine increase over that for Middle Helladic. Our suggestion of a multi-focal hamlet cluster for the earlier period and a small, more focused hamlet for the later does not, therefore, carry any implication of a rise in population, at least in this locality. In any case, the different form of settlement proposed for Early Helladic makes the contrast between it and either of these successor-periods a misleading one, as earlier noted; while the longer period for the deposition of finds also affects any comparison. In our view, however, not even the Early Helladic data suggest a significant population on the later city site. This conclusion is supported when we look at the denser, yet still quite extensive, Bronze Age evidence from the nearest larger villages of Palaeokarandas and Askra/Site VM 4, forming a contrast with that from Thespiai. It could be countered that Palaeokarandas has no notable later historical finds to limit sample recovery; but the Bronze Age material at Askra does indeed suffer massive later swamping from Greco-Roman and other, slighter finds.

The picture remains one in which the later city of Thespiai exemplifies continuous, small-scale rural occupation over millennia of prehistory, without demonstrable major population fluctuations. The changes registered seem rather to reflect the manner in which populations were distributed across the landscape, influenced first by technological and later by socio-political factors. The rise of the first culture based on true regional centres, those located in Mycenaean Thebes and Orchomenos, shows a surprising lack of visible evidence for any stimulus to growth on the part of Thespiai.

Two provisional comments might finally be made. On the one hand, current reappraisals of Aegean landscape archaeology emphasize the diversity of pathways taken in different regions, even in different smaller districts, in the longer term (Dickinson 1982; Bintliff 1997a; Cherry and Davis 2001). Perhaps the Boeotia Project, when publication of all the areas surveyed is complete, may be able to attest to a genuine rise in the numbers and size of Late Helladic sites; but alternatively it may be that, for remoter districts, palatial authority was content to exploit existing resources rather than increase the productivity of its territory, and so was less of a stimulus to growth. Certainly, as pointed out in Chapter 5, there is a clear absence of Mycenaean fortification in the Thespiai district, to say nothing of the large fortified central places at close intervals, such as we find in the Mycenaean heartland of the Plain of Argos (Bintliff 1977; Marzolff 2004). Those centres which do exist in south-western Boeotia are also further apart (Eutresis, Haliartos), perhaps implying a less developed political and economic landscape. In the light of a recent tendency to see the Mycenaean palace-states as balancing a state economy against a major private economy (Halstead 1992), such regional contrasts appear less surprising.

If Thebes controlled as large a territory as the Linear B tablets from its palatial administration indicate (Dakouri-Hild 2005), then it will have relied on a cumulative wealth in manpower and food production from its rural dependencies. All the more interesting that its supposed rival power in the west of Boeotia, Orchomenos, undertook an immense reclamation project in Lake Kopais (Iakovidis 2001), in order to increase its far less favourable natural resources and smaller territory (on which see Farinetti 2011, especially Chapters II.3.4, II.3.12).

Needless to say, the listing of 'Thespeia' in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships, at *Iliad* ii 249, seems wholly incompatible with the minor hamlet of actuality revealed in our archaeological survey; the passage as a whole is better understood as referring to cities of importance in the eighth century BC, in or close to Homer's lifetime: compare Fossey 1997 for further discussion.

The historical Greek periods

Merged Late Helladic–Early Iron Age, Early Iron Age, Protogeometric and Geometric (Fig. 3.57)
Early Iron Age–Geometric/Archaic, Late Geometric, Late Geometric/Archaic, and Geometric/Archaic (Fig. 3.58)
Since there are so few closely dated pieces from the Early Iron Age, we can begin by discussing these two related distribution maps together. Only one definite Protogeometric sherd, from a Transect some 150 m east of the *Kastro* (this from an era that extended from *c*. 1050 to 900 BC), does duty for this most fugitive of periods. Even with our previous suggestion that the area around the Magoula had formed only a dispersed hamlet or small village in the Late Helladic period, the evidence for some level of continuity through this era is of the weakest kind.

Within the broader Early Iron Age – extending from *c*. 1050 to 690 BC and covering the Protogeometric, Early, Middle and Late Geometric ceramic phases – the only other sub-phase which can be separately distinguished is that of Late Geometric, roughly the period 750–690 BC. The scant LG finds (11 sherds in all) are still found around the Magoula, but also in the later *Kastro* (the focus of the Classical city centre), with two further pieces from just outside and south-east of the *Kastro*, which might be added to the emerging core zone. The rare pieces from the outer south-western, eastern and north-eastern grid units are in locations later to become regular extramural cemetery zones for the city.

Even for the much broader grouping of 'Geometric', *c*. 900–690 BC, just two definite pieces are plotted and one possible; but significantly they come from the Magoula vicinity and the same far eastern locality just noted for LG. Wider still, and fortunately more fully represented, is the category termed 'Early Iron Age' (Fig. 3.57), made up of pieces which could belong anywhere in the three centuries from Protogeometric to the end of Geometric. Once more, a potential group appears around the Magoula and *Kastro*, especially to their east, with singletons in future burial zones in the far west, south and (again) the far east; but several

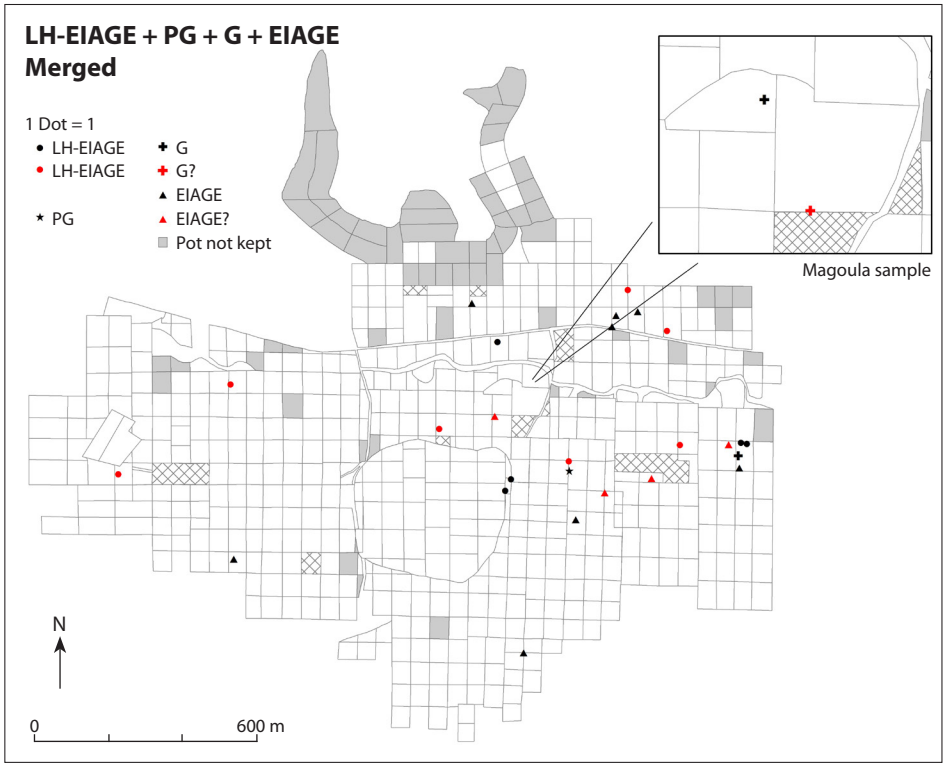


Figure 3.57. *Combined distribution of Late Helladic / Early Iron Age, Early Iron Age, Proto-geometric and Geometric sherds, together with 'possible' finds.*

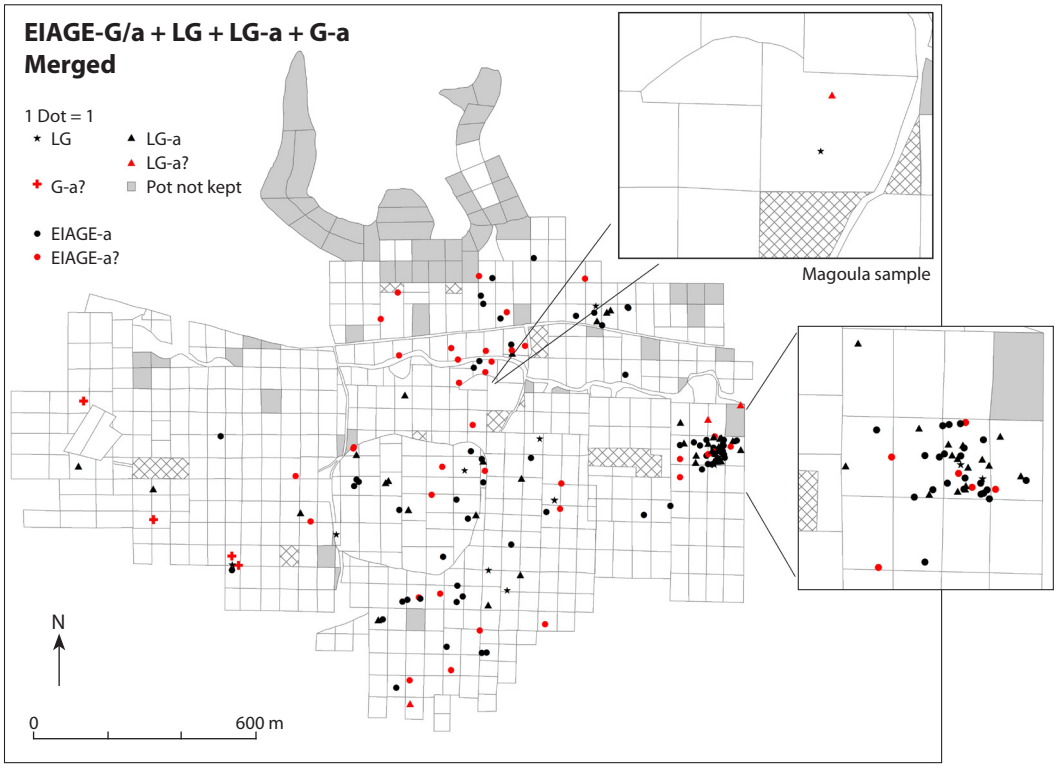


Figure 3.58. *Combined distribution of Early Iron Age / Archaic, Geometric / Archaic and Late Geometric / Archaic sherds, together with 'possible' finds.*

pieces also appear across the Kanavaris stream, in the later cemetery zones to the north and north-east. The eastern scatter also appears once again.

A vaguer category still is the 'Late Helladic to Early Iron Age' (Fig. 3.57), which has quite a few pieces, but unfortunately covers a very wide chronological swathe. The core zone from the *Kastro* and Magoula eastwards is marked, as also the later cemetery zones in the outer west, north-east, and east. Two final groups cause different problems, as they cross over from the pre- and proto-historic phases so far discussed into the following, early historical phase of the Archaic (*c.* 690–500 BC). These are the 'Early Iron Age to Archaic' and 'Late Geometric to Archaic' (Fig. 3.58). Taken together, these groups already sketch in almost all of the later Archaic to Classical city, from the core zone which runs from west of the *Kastro* through the *Kastro* units; and again from the Magoula vicinity southwards, as far as the grid units immediately south of the *Kastro*. At the same time, they significantly fill out the area of later cemeteries, to the north-east and (possibly) north, to the east and south. As yet however activity remains sparse in the areas west of the *Kastro*, as far as the later peripheral western cemetery zone.

The limited numbers of finds for the post-Bronze Age and pre-Archaic eras make any clear interpretation problematic. In fact, the positively datable finds from the end of the mature Mycenaean (LH III B) to the start of Late Geometric amount to precisely two! It is also clear that, by comparison to the Archaic, there is as yet no sign of a solid block of urban occupation. We could imagine (cf. Snodgrass 1991a) either a model in which a core village expands in size from Protogeometric times into Archaic within the Magoula-*Kastro* area and its immediate east, in which case the peripheral finds would merely anticipate their later role as cemeteries; or, preferring the 'Thucydidean' model, we could posit a town developing through the synoecism or merger of a series of close-spaced small rural communities, eventually to form a fairly solid built-up area of public and private structures by the end of Archaic times or early Classical times, when a defence wall finally enclosed it (see pp. 90–92). The relative distance of the small outlying areas of finds from the scatters in the later city core make more sense if we see the former as separate hamlet-plus-burial localities. The far eastern cluster of finds, especially, and the lesser focus in the outer north-east zone, might well mark favoured areas of burial (and perhaps of settlement too?), at a distance from the finds in the later central core of the city. The eastern cluster is not too far from the rural cemetery further east along the

Thebes road, known to have been in use already in Archaic times, into which the Classical public monument or *Polyandrion* would be inserted for the city's war dead. These comments are echoed in the ceramic chapter by Vladimir Stissi (Chapter 11).

We are inclined to favour this dispersed hamlet model, notably exhibited in the equivalent pre-Archaic finds from Athens, Corinth and Argos, as well as elsewhere. When, as in these latter, better-documented towns, the town grew into a contiguous settled core area, the outlying hamlets reverted to purely funerary functions. This model would also require that any burial practised in association with the core hamlet would have been banned, once the formal boundaries of the built-up town had been defined, no doubt at some point in Archaic times, and definitively once the city wall was constructed.

The scale of the Early Iron Age settlement is obviously hard to estimate. For sure, the usual overlay of Classical Greek and Roman limits the chances of Early Iron Age material appearing on the surface; as with the prehistoric finds from earlier millennia, we can safely assume that the numbers we recover are but a fraction, not only of those currently on the surface (using the percentage approach explained earlier), but also of the far greater proportion that will lie buried under the stratigraphy of the historical city. As Vladimir Stissi (Chapter 11) comments, it is quite likely that some PG lies hidden within the broader categories of 'EIAGE' and 'EIAGE-a' sherds (more than 220 pieces in all); while the commoner 'LG-a' is also likely to include a substantial proportion of LG (eighth-century) material. These considerations make plausible a denser occupation than our maps might suggest.

Nonetheless, we find it difficult to reconstruct more than a series of small villages or hamlets, scattered widely over the later city area and beyond into the later cemetery zones. Vladimir Stissi, responsible for the dating of the pottery of this whole period, comments that the closely dated pieces are most likely to emanate from burials. The PG and G pieces are far too few to make much of this insight, but by LG times the wide distribution of such pieces would on this view suggest that, at least by the eighth century BC, when it has widely been argued that south Mainland Greek populations rose – if not as dramatically as once believed (Morris 1987, 156–9) – Thespiai had burial zones across the later city core and in all its later major peripheral cemetery sectors to the south, north-east and east – by implication, still accompanied by domestic structures. The dispersed hamlet-small village model could be related to separate kin-groups, possibly associated with leading men or *basileis*. Hesiod, living in nearby Askra at the close of this period, is widely taken to be referring, in his *Works and Days* (39) to the aristocrats of Thespiai as 'bribe-devouring *basileis*', signifying a clearly oligarchical power structure by the end of the Late Geometric. The model we propose might just be the spatial manifestation of such an oligarchic political structure for the town. But the Hesiodic citation would further hint that, by this point, Thespiai must in reality have been a more populous centre than even our LG and LG – A finds indicate, if it was able to control Askra and the Valley of the Muses as well as its own inner *chora*.

Archaic (and 'Archaic?') and Archaic–Classical (Fig. 3.59)
The striking fact is that the full shape of the city, as recognized from the overall Density Maps seen earlier (pp. 51–4), now emerges for the first time.

But there again arises the general problem already encountered earlier in this chapter (see especially pp. 56–9), that of separating out domestic and public occupation from burial and other extramural activities. There is, too, a further complicating factor that now appears for the first time: the demonstrable occurrence of urban manuring activity, heavily focused on the generic 'Archaic–Classical–Early Hellenistic' period (see *Testing the Hinterland*: 23–37). In theory, this might already in Archaic times have created an urban 'halo', stretching out from the built-up area into the surrounding landscape beyond the city survey grid. Yet the numbers of dated Archaic sherds here mapped are relatively limited. Our argument, following Wilkinson (1989), would be that a vigorous regime of urban manuring is a sign of pressure on the land, which hardly suits the Archaic era. Rather, it should be associated with the problems of food and population that came to a head at the time of the demographic peak in the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic eras (Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985; Bintliff 1997). In our view, then, the Archaic finds are very unlikely to demonstrate systematic agricultural manuring. Waste dumping within and around domestic areas, on the other hand, is actually predicated on the assumption that it was *not* being collected and carted out into the fields of urban farmers. Thus, on the Merged map for the Archaic period, the borders between the occupied areas and the burial zones of this era might well be fringed by waste-disposal haloes.

We return now to the point initially made. It is to be expected that, during the two-century-long Archaic phase, a general transformation of the city would have occurred (Snodgrass 1987–89: 62–4). On the model of other nascent city-states, this would include the more formal structuring of space into the domestic zones, the public sector of *agora*, sanctuaries and civic buildings, and the world of the dead – the cemeteries now

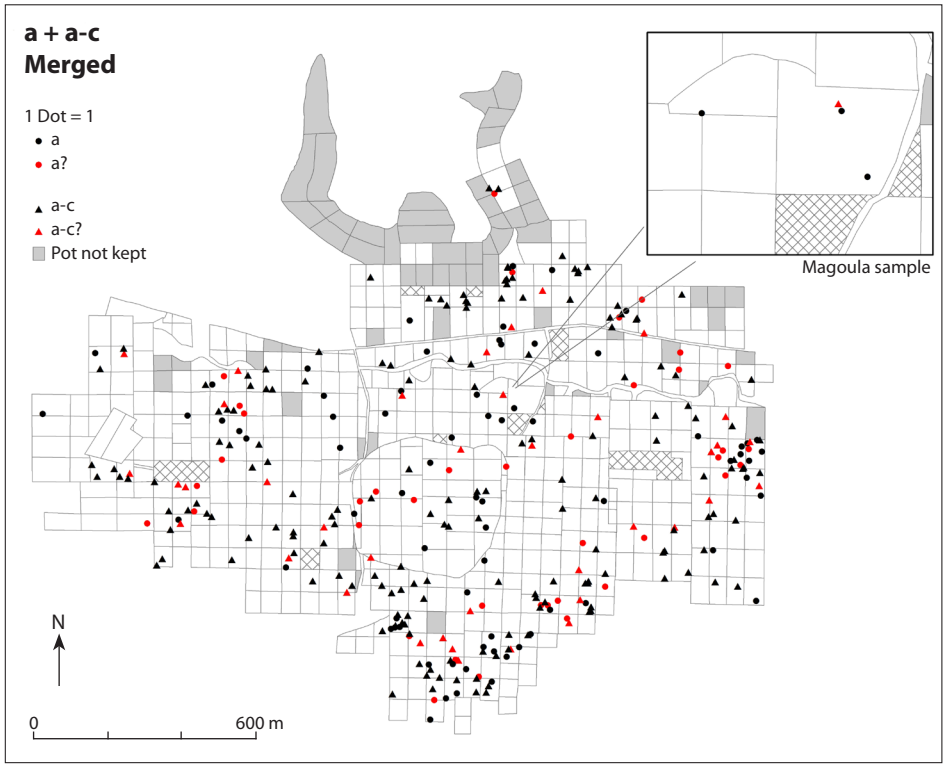


Figure 3.59. *Distribution of Archaic and Archaic / Classical sherds.*

banished beyond the formal boundaries of the town, whether or not this was marked by a fortification circuit before the end of the Archaic era (Hölkeskamp 2004). The historical sources would suggest that during this period, between *c*. 700 and 500 BC, a city of some importance arose at Thespiai (see Chapter 5, pp. 202–4). Nonetheless, the general evidence from city origins elsewhere in the Aegean would suggest that a city wall proper would be unlikely until the very end of Archaic times – as opposed to a refuge wall round an acropolis, something which anyway, in the particular case of Thespiai, did not arise before Late Classical times at the earliest.

We have earlier used the total sherd density maps to suggest where the Classical city of Thespiai ended and the 'countryside' began, in effect bringing all but the very outermost edge of the city grid into non-rural functions. Since then, examination of the immediately preceding periods has suggested that the origins of many, possibly all the later extramural cemetery zones of Classical times can be traced back to a series of small dispersed hamlet-cemeteries of the Geometric and Archaic phases. By the end of the latter phase, in any case, it seems more than likely that a town would have been put in place, with formal cemeteries banished to its fringes.

How far can the Archaic maps flesh out or confirm these expectations? It will probably be generally agreed among specialists (compare Catling (1996)) that the domestic and coarse wares that make up the preponderance of Archaic pottery suffer, like those of the Geometric period, from problems of recognition: even the minority fine wares, when worn, may go unclassified. On the other hand, the general increase in human activity at this time, abundantly documented by rural and urban surveys and excavations in southern Greece, should greatly enhance the sheer quantity of discarded pottery in our site deposits and hence improve its chances of being identified and collected, regardless of any under-representation.

As already noted, the Archaic map agrees in showing a shape which matches quite well the extent of the 'urban' level of density discussed earlier (pp. 51–4). There is a clear structure. The later core of the city, in the *Kastro* and to its east, is surprisingly thin, but then this thin scatter slowly builds up on all sides, centrifugally, until we encounter clear clusters in the known historical cemetery areas in the south, west, east, north and north-east. In the earlier discussion, we already picked out certain peripheral sectors as lying outside the likely built-up area of the historical Greco-Roman city, suggesting that they should

be cemetery zones: these outer groupings of Archaic material largely fall within them. If, in Geometric times, the burials had been grouped around small domestic foci as suggested just now (p. 87), these may have undergone a degree of formalization during the Archaic era. Cemeteries may not generate such massive cumulative deposits over time as do domestic housing areas, and graves may show more respect for earlier interments than the rebuilding of houses permits. But since burials, by their nature, involve the deliberate interment in the subsoil of those artefacts actually placed in the grave, we may still expect them to produce locally enhanced, and significantly more diagnostic, surface finds, such as we have in these localities. Vladimir Stissi's examination of the Archaic to Early Classical finds across the city grid (Chapter 11) has confirmed the likely cemetery concentrations on the urban periphery; while added finds can now be included from the line of the modern east–west road north of the Kanavaris, where the recent Ephoreia excavations have indeed uncovered cemetery finds from the Archaic through to Roman period (Chapter 4, Addendum).

One other observation is not to be neglected. As already pointed out, there is rather little Archaic material recorded from the core of the Classical and Roman to Late Roman community, the probable setting for, successively, the *agora,* then the Forum, and finally the fortified Late Antique *Kastro*, together with the zone immediately to its east where the rest of the Roman to Late Roman community will be found to be concentrated. In these two areas, the distorting effect that the dominance of Roman to Late Roman finds exerts on the material of earlier periods, already repeatedly noted, will once again have operated with the Archaic finds. Less easily accounted for, however, is the relative poverty of Archaic material in the area immediately west of the *Kastro*, which in our view most probably lay within the Classical city wall. A possible inference here is that only in Classical times was this zone progressively in-filled with domestic settlement.

Archaic/Classical (and 'Archaic/Classical?')

On the same map (Fig. 3.59) we display the more prolific material which can belong to either period. The finds offer a broad distribution, but it is even clearer that a broad band, running from east to west through the *Kastro* and the zone immediately to its north – that is, most of the inner part of the survey grid – is thinner in finds than the peripheral zones of the grid.

A comparison with the preceding, purely Archaic distribution shows a significant increase in the numbers of finds. This may in part be accounted for simply by the inclusion of finds which may belong to either one of two successive periods, as well as the (probably fewer) genuinely transitional sherds. In any case this spread, even more than its Archaic predecessor, brings out a ring-like shape for the densest clusters, which in the absence of further evidence could mislead one into imagining a 'O'-shaped town ringing the *Kastro* on all of its sides, with only a small peak in density in the far eastern extremity of the grid. Yet it is precisely in these lower-density areas of the *Kastro* and its immediate vicinity, especially on the eastern side, that the proposed core of the late Archaic and Classical town lies.

We have argued that, from the Archaic period onwards, these outer zones are especially devoted to a ring of cemeteries, lying in every direction outwards from the town, whose built-up area will lie predominantly in the central sectors, with their thinner finds. But there are now other urban activities that can be expected to be carried out beyond the town proper, suburban sanctuaries, craft establishments, scattered suburban homes and market gardens as well as rubbish dumps.

We may have here the counterpart of the explanation just used for a different feature of the Archaic maps: namely, the enhancement in quantity and quality of the pre-Classical and other extramural cemetery finds, by comparison with the those from the domestic and public zones of the city, which then suffered perhaps 12 centuries of direct over-building and overlay of cultural débris. The pre-Classical periods are also particularly affected by the factor of sherd quality, in that our poorer knowledge of coarse and domestic wares, compared to that of fine wares, privileges the latter: this is less true of the Classical, Early Hellenistic and most (but not all, see *infra*) Roman wares.

If the area to the east of the *Kastro* still appears impoverished, we can now see some infilling from the *Kastro* westwards, especially to the south-west, as well as to the south. Across the Kanavaris, the spread is now impressive over most of the grid units: this is noteworthy as probably representing primarily cemetery material, in an area whose western and northern parts will be temporarily converted to domestic and other secular uses by the Hellenistic era, if not before, as we shall be discussing later. Notable, too, is the high ratio of 'definite' to 'possible', compared with the other peripheral cemeteries: this supports the funerary interpretation, and also suggests that this area had less interference, from domestic or cemetery finds of later historical eras, than was often the case elsewhere.

In summary, the early nucleated city, not yet defined by a fortification-wall, is best delineated,

through the filters of taphonomy and ceramic diagnosticity, by its surrounding burial areas. In the core of the built-up area, by contrast, a combination of the immense density of later finds and discriminatory taphonomy and weathering, has acted to play down the evidence from this phase. Nonetheless, the progression from the vestigial Protogeometric, through the intervening phases, to the Archaic and Archaic/Classical shows a continuous and undeniable trend towards more and more widespread human activity over these centuries. By the dawn of the fifth century BC, in our view, a scatter of small hamlets has grown into a single coherent nucleation.

This observation is reinforced by the notable development in the far west of the city area, where significant Archaic and transitional finds mark the fairly abrupt rise of what we have argued to be a major extramural north–south cemetery zone, in an area without many earlier finds. In the recent rescue excavations which cut through the northern extremity of this zone, graves of this era were found, along with those of high Classical and Hellenistic times.

A rise in population, even if only to a level well below the peaks to be reached in later periods, can also be inferred. Here it is worth revisiting the evidence, summarized in *Testing the Hinterland*: 131–2, from the city's territory immediately to the south during the pre-Classical phases. Only a small number of the rural sites – a combination of rural cemeteries, farms and perhaps sanctuaries – produced definite evidence for Geometric or Archaic activity. Inclusion of the 'possible' finds for these categories would enlarge this number several times over, but these are questionable attributions. The Askris Potamos/Palaeokarandas village, further south again, is almost certainly occupied in Archaic times and perhaps slightly earlier.

Classical and 'Classical?' (Fig. 3.60)

The density of finds is still not high and, once again, tends to be concentrated in the outer sectors, except for a focus within and just outside the north-western *Kastro*, which is not readily explained. One potentially relevant factor here is that the civic centre of the ancient town lay in this general vicinity, including what may have been its main temple, already in place from later Archaic times (Chapter 5, p. 203). A higher than usual density of fine, and hence recognisably Classical, pottery might therefore be expected within this sector of the survey grid.

The map shows a continuation of the wide spread already observed in Archaic, incorporating almost all the domestic, public and burial zones that we have

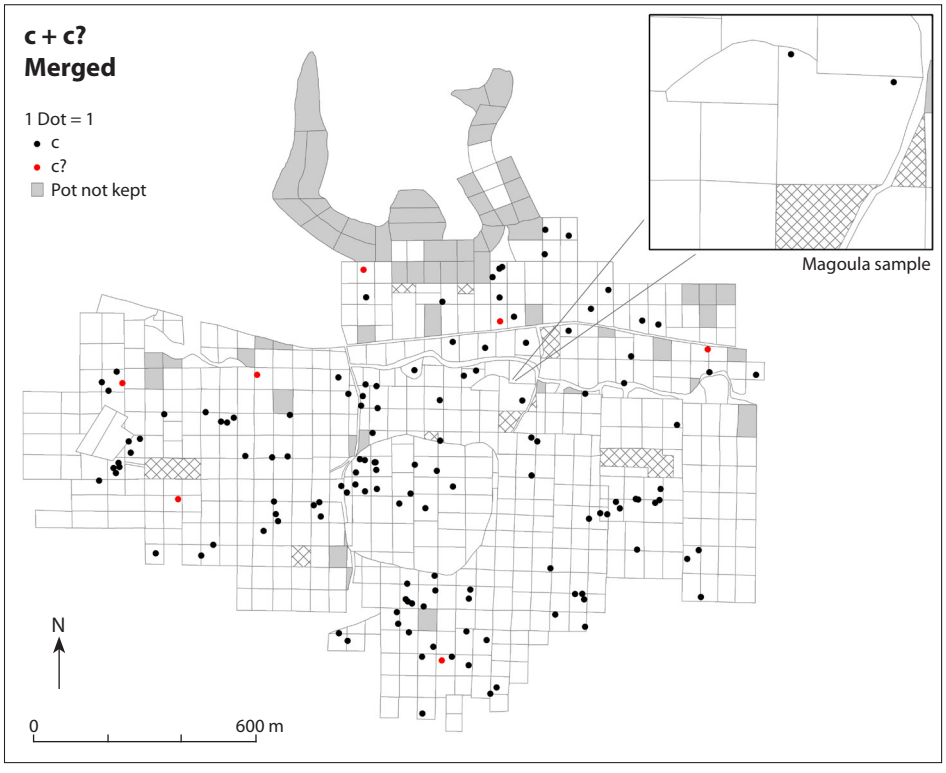


Figure 3.60. *Distribution of Classical (and 'Classical?') sherds.*

hypothesized. Only the outermost eastern sector is strangely neglected in this distribution, losing its cluster of finds from Archaic times: this could perhaps mark merely a change in the popularity of the burial areas over time. Vladimir Stissi, in discussing the Classical finds (Chapter 11), again confirms that the nature of the material recovered points to a ring of cemeteries.

The heavy overlay of material from the built-up Classical city has repeatedly been cited as a cause of under-representation in the earlier occupational débris. But now, despite a further 900 years or so of urban life still to come, the case, based on both historical and archaeological grounds, for setting the demographic peak of the town and its territory in the Classical Greek era would lead us to expect material of the fifth and fourth centuries BC to be a common element throughout intra- and extra-mural grid units. But the clear diagnostic category of 'Classical', as applied to fine wares, is not matched by a similar precision in the case of most coarse or domestic wares. It is now widely held (compare Vladimir Stissi, Chapter 11) that many everyday wares saw little development between Classical and earlier Hellenistic times (*c.* 500–150/100 BC), with this relatively static situation possibly extending not only forwards into the Hellenistic wares, but perhaps also with continuities extending back into the less fine wares of Archaic times.

It will by now be clear why the Classical maps on their own cannot be used to define city edges or functional zones. The patchiness of the finds, the well-attested, varying employment of similar pot forms in domestic, cemetery or religious contexts, the prevalence from this period of radial manuring activity, using urban refuse spread out into the countryside – all these combine to warn us that the functional zoning is something that can only be unravelled by a wide range of evidence from different approaches.

Classical/Hellenistic (and 'Classical/Hellenistic?'), with Classical/Middle Hellenistic (Fig. 3.61), plus Archaic/Hellenistic (and 'Archaic/Hellenistic?') (Fig. 3.62)

Given the very selective nature of the finds that can be precisely dated to the fifth and fourth centuries BC, we may fall back on the far fuller data available for the longer period, extending from Classical through to a mature phase of the Hellenistic era ('C–H'). The end point for the application of this term is not clearly defined, nor are the everyday wares of the last 100–150 years BC so well-known as those of the preceding centuries: they include significant material of Roman origin or style. Currently, however, Vladimir

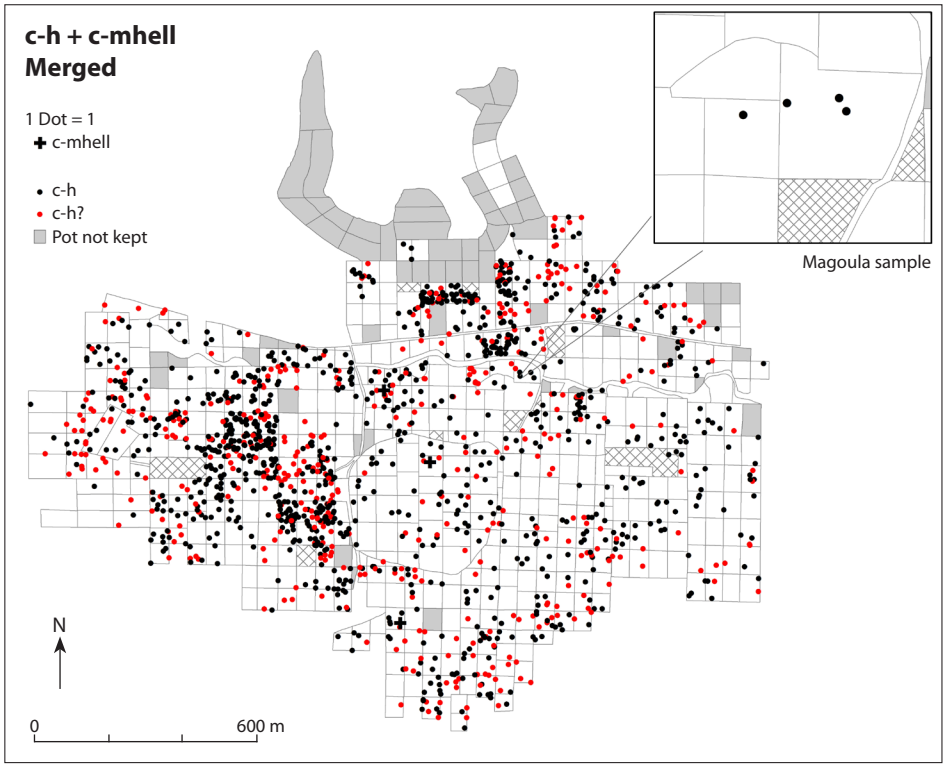


Figure 3.61. *Distribution of Classical /Hellenistic and Classical / Middle Hellenistic sherds, together with 'possible' finds.*

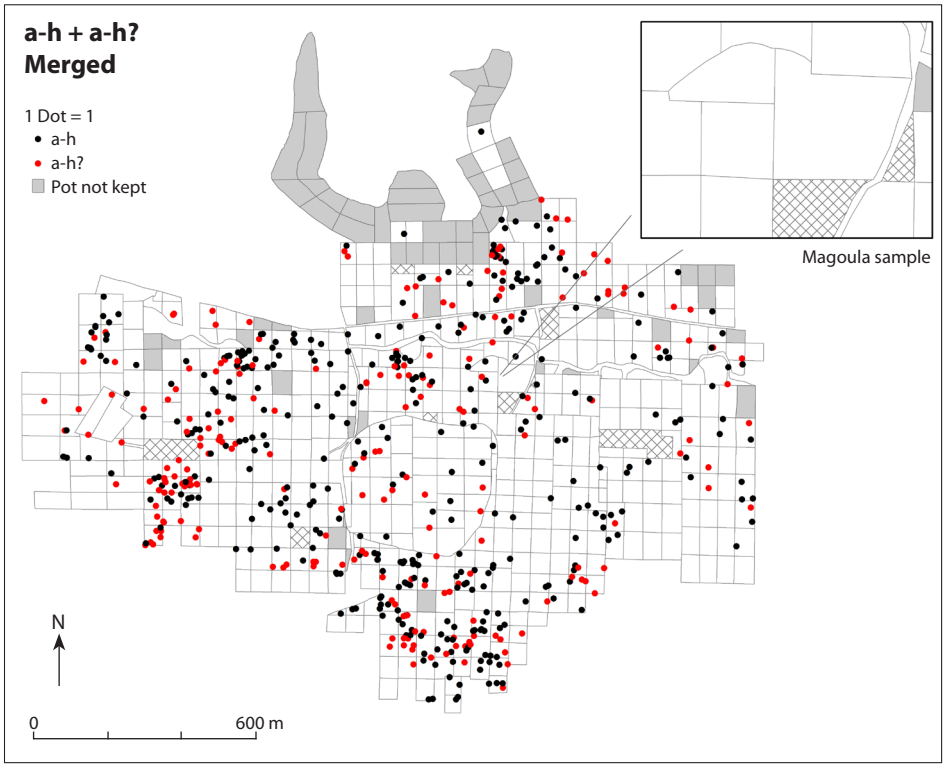


Figure 3.62. *Distribution of Archaic / Hellenistic (and 'Archaic / Hellenistic?') sherds.*

Stissi suggests that perhaps 90 per cent or more of the finds assigned to 'C–H' belong within the range of Classical to the end of the Middle Hellenistic, *c*. 500 – 150/100 BC, with a small amount spilling over into the ensuing, Late Hellenistic phase. The even longer period covered by the 'Archaic–Hellenistic' finds can also be usefully studied in connection with C–H: here the starting point is *c*. 700, and the most likely end point again *c*. 150/100 BC.

From the start of the Classical period, for the first time, we need to take detailed account not only of the historically attested city wall, but of the fortification-wall now discovered by Božidar Slapšak, north of the Kanavaris: here we reproduce, as Fig. 3.63, the functional map discussed earlier (Fig. 3.39). The indications of the western, far northern and eastern lines of the latter are based on discoveries within, and in the outskirts of, modern Thespies village. But for various reasons we believe that, until the late Classical and Hellenistic eras, the attested city wall of Thespiai, constructed some while before 423 BC and destroyed more than once by its Theban enemies, lay entirely south of the river (see Chapter 4, Part ii). What we believe to be a section of this older wall was located in 1987, running just north of the Magoula on roughly a north-east to south-west line. From here on we restore, conjecturally, the remainder of the Classical city wall as forming a rough rectangle: the issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. A large, probably Archaic temple, excavated by P. Jamot in 1890, and with it very likely the Archaic *agora*, lie at the heart of the *Kastro* enceinte (see p. 90; Chapter 5, p. 203).

The new wall line north of the Kanavaris is very clear in its western course. When its line is extended to the south, across the river, it points directly to a place where we had postulated, on the evidence of scattered wall-blocks, that the older circuit-wall, after running roughly east–westwards, made a radical change in direction southwards. If instead one follows the line of the new trans-Kanavaris wall in the opposite direction, northwards, it ascends the western side of the hill on which modern Thespies village stands, turns at a hillock that forms the highest point in the village, then descends the slope again, parallel to the valley separating Thespies village from its eastern neighbour Leondari. There is no certainty about the route of its eastern 'leg', once it leaves the vicinity of the village, nor about its return junction with the wall south of the river; but the evidence suggests that it ran in the general direction of the Magoula, joining up with the older wall at the eastern end of the latter's most visible stretch, but well short of its eastern corner.

The dating of the cross-river extension relies primarily on the ceramic evidence. The finds from the original city survey show considerable activity north of the river, extending from prehistory to early Modern times. As earlier noted, large areas of the trans-Kanavaris zone were at first believed to be extramural for the entire Greco-Roman period; the quality and quantity of some of the material led to the suggestion of burial and/or sanctuary use in these periods. In addition, a hamlet of Medieval and Ottoman date was postulated, around the Agios Athanasios church east of the centre. The observation made at that time (see p. 64), that colluvial obscuring of surface finds had taken place on a large scale in the northern and north-western parts of the sector, limited the utility of the urban survey in such terrain: hence the repeated appearance of the grey-shaded, 'non-collection', units at the northernmost extremity of the city grid. For prehistoric and Geometric times, we have argued for habitation, as well as burial, in this trans-Kanavaris sector. Indeed, even the subsequent period maps, extending from Classical/Hellenistic to Late Roman, do not in themselves provide any clear evidence to rule out domestic occupation in the Greco-Roman period, although closer study of the Archaic to Classical finds (Chapter 11) indicates likely burials right across this zone. It is only by the application of several aspects of the record, including analysis of the structure of the density maps and the observations of the field- and pottery-teams, that a strong working model of the functional history of each sector can be created.

But the historical sources may also be put to use in reconstructing the history of this trans-Kanavaris zone. On several occasions in Classical times, down to the time of the Theban hegemony in the earlier fourth century BC, Thespiai was attacked, and its town walls destroyed more than once. On two of these occasions, the citizens are recorded as having withdrawn, in the absence of a strong acropolis of their own, to a refuge called Keressos, safe from cavalry attack and in general much more defensible than their city. It seems clear that this refuge was in the territory of Thespiai, but at a distance from the city itself, which had to be abandoned when the move to Keressos was made. The hill on which Thespies village stands, whether before or after its enclosure within the circuit of the

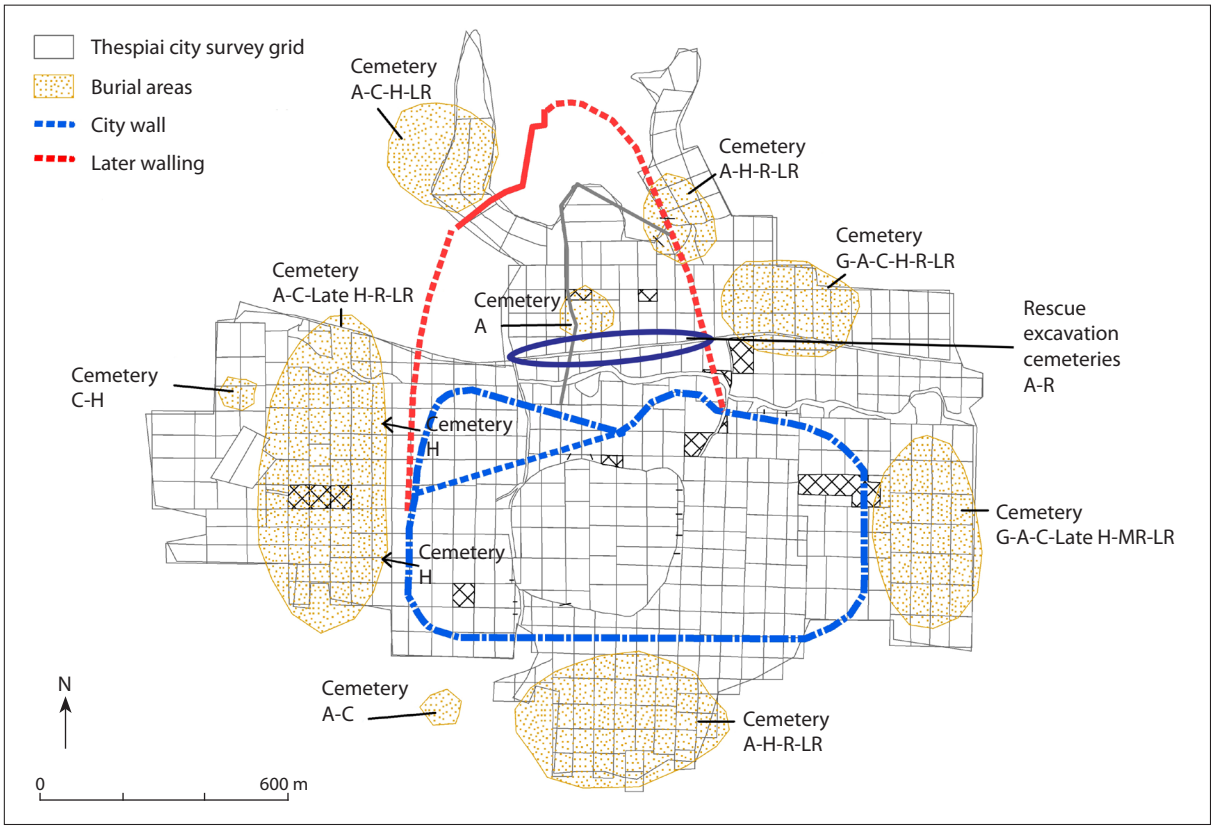


Figure 3.63. *Sketch map (repeated from Fig. 3.39, p.61) showing proposed locations of cemeteries, together with the earlier (blue) and later (red) fortification walls*

city walls, cannot in our view be a possible candidate for identification with Keressos: its position is so close to the town and its cemeteries that it would have been seen as a conventional acropolis for the city. Other Greek cities may indeed have acropoleis at a distance from their lower towns: Corinth is a famous example, and Thisbe in Boeotia another. Yet these are always in some way integrated into the defensive plans. Had the Thespians used the village hill in these emergences, it would have been no great task to extend their city walls in this direction. This is what was eventually done: presumably, it took place after the last known use of the Keressos refuge in 371 BC. The abiding problem is: why did the Thespians not fortify this hill, so close to their town, at an earlier date?

Military logistics may provide an answer. The hill of modern Thespies village is most defensible towards the city below to its south, through a steep cliff-slope; it is neither greatly elevated, nor difficult of access, from the high plateau extending behind it to the north. On its east and west sides, steep-sided valleys protect it. The inadequacy of the hill-top area to shelter the whole urban population on its own demanded the linkage to the main fortification; yet the weak protection from attack on the north side, and the fact that the most difficult approach was actually on the side facing the lower town, left the defenders of this acropolis with many problems. As noted below, it was only from the fourth century that new, more powerful siege engines became widespread, enabling long-range bombardment from adjacent heights into walls and city-interiors (Ober 1987). No wonder, then, that the inhabitants for long preferred to develop the fertile, well-watered and well-routed locality on the north bank of the river, at the expense of incorporating it into a convenient stronghold for themselves against their enemies. Recent fieldwork within our project has indeed located a very likely candidate for Keressos on the Pyrgaki hill in the Valley of the Muses, to be presented in a subsequent volume.

Whether or not this particular identification can stand, we can set the new trans-Kanavaris city wall extension after 371 BC, when Keressos is last recorded in use, and indeed after the end of the Theban hegemony a decade later, which gave the Boeotian cities their first opportunity for some time past to recover their freedom of action. Presently, Alexander's destruction of Thebes, in 335 BC after the battle of Chaironeia, did even more to further the assertion of autonomy by individual Boeotian cities. It is also in the Late Classical period that documentary and archaeological sources agree in positing an unprecedented (and never yet repeated) level of population in Boeotia. All these considerations favour either a final Classical or an early Hellenistic date for a likely enlargement and re-planning of Thespiai on expansive lines. Perhaps not coincidentally, this is also argued to be the period when Tanagra was totally reorganized on a Hippodamian plan (Roller 1974; 1987), with a major associated re-fortification. Even more suggestive is the recent evidence from the city of Plataia (Konecky, Aravantinos and Marchese 2013), where an Archaic to high Classical circuit of limited area, surrounding the low acropolis, is replaced, during the final Classical decades after the end of the Theban hegemony, by an enceinte enclosing a vastly greater area. Significantly, only part of this enlargement appears ever to have been completed, the grandiose scheme of urban growth being checked in mature Hellenistic times. This led to the subsequent construction of a new inner wall, in between the outer and inner south extensions of the town. Božidar Slapšak's team's aerial photographs at Haliartos, to be included in a later Boeotia Project Volume, have for the first time revealed that, at a certain point, this town too received a plan on the Hippodamian model, exemplifying a different aspect of this wave of urban re-configuration in the Boeotian cities. At another of our urban survey sites, at ancient Hyettos in northern Boeotia, three seasons of geophysics by a team led by Apostolos Sarris have likewise revealed a regular grid-plan covering the Lower Town (unpublished research reports 2013–2015), though we have yet to date this development. Finally, Klaus Fittschen (2002) has suggested that the north Boeotian town of Orchomenos received its large uphill extension after 335 when, with the destruction of Thebes, this city planned a major extension to the upper ridge of Mount Akontion. The extension appears to have been incomplete: Fittschen suggests that the swift revival of Thebes caused such expansive acts on the part of its neighbours to cease, or to run out of funding. Here the parallels with Thespiai are especially close: the original settlement of Orchomenos too was low-lying, at the foot of a steep hill and, with the advances made in siege missiles by the fourth century, it became increasingly open to threats from the high ground above it. The new long walls ran up Mount Akontion to the summit, where a massive keep offered a major obstacle to incursion along the flat ridge beyond, while the same walls prevented the taking of higher ground overlooking the core of the city. As at Thespiai, it is clear that the area of this extension housed few buildings.

A *terminus ante quem* for the extended wall of Thespiai can, on several grounds, be set in the second century BC. The local evidence at Tanagra and Plataia would place the changes there at a date well before this – the mid- to late fourth century BC, according to Roller and Konecny respectively, while the evidence from Haliartos, destroyed by the Romans in 171 BC and essentially abandoned thereafter, must precede that date.

More relevant locally is the fact that, at Thespiai, the ceramic evidence from the city south of the Kanavaris now begins to show a radical and permanent retraction in the core of domestic and public activity from the Late Hellenistic age, between about 150/100 BC and the beginning of the Christian era – something not easily compatible with a move to expand the protected area.

A further factor is that, although the Roman hegemony over central Greece, from the time of the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BC) onwards, might seem to have made the fresh building of fortifications appear increasingly superfluous, especially on the part of cities like Thespiai which had voluntarily sought alliance with Rome, the refurbishing of existing ones might still become necessary. Cities like Thespiai might find themselves at odds with their neighbours, or with larger powers hostile to Rome; and in fact the traces of several re-buildings can be detected in the mud-brick stretches of the extended wall. There is an unexpectedly late confirmation of this, in one final historical reference to a fortified Thespiai, in the course of the First Mithridatic War (88–85 BC): Mithridates's general Archelaos, advancing from Athens through Boeotia 'like a torrent' (Plutarch, *Life of Sulla* xi. 4), found resistance only in Thespiai, which he was forced to besiege, evidently at some length (Appian, *Mithridateios* 29). Presently the opposition of a smaller Roman army under Q. Bruttius Sura, marching southwards from Macedonia, forced Archelaos to retreat. The necessity for a siege is proof that Thespiai still had usable walls; the speed of Archelaos's initial advance is clear evidence that these walls were already in existence, not improvised from scratch; and the fact that the Thespians afterwards voted a statue and a gold wreath to Bruttius (or Braetius) Sura in gratitude (Roesch 2007, i 40–1: no. 34) comes close to proving that the siege had been unsuccessful and that the walls had held out for long enough: the days of mass-flight to the refuge of Keressos were long gone. The end of the fighting in Greece, in 86 BC, at last put an end to Boeotia's sufferings from large-scale warfare.

The pottery collections made in the last few years by the Slovenian team (see Chapter 4, part (ii)), around the new walls north of the river and on a building site in the west-centre of the newly enclosed extension, indicate probable non-domestic use of the area in Archaic times and earlier, and possible domestic activity in the Hellenistic era of the third–first centuries BC, according to the provisional evaluation of Vladimir Stissi. Early Roman Imperial finds are absent from these localized contexts, while definite burials in the sector were recorded from Late Roman times. But to complicate the picture there is the theatre, seen by Pausanias (ix. 27. 4) in the later second century AD and located beyond all doubt on the central hill-slope below Thespies village, near the apex of the triangle created by the new fortification (see also Chapter 4, pp. 174–82 for the contribution by Uroš Kirn).

Finally, the recent rescue excavations along the modern road to Thebes just north of the Kanavaris (see pp. 63, 196–8, and now Charami *et al*. 2014) have added precious new evidence for the funerary use of the trans-Kanavaris sector. A limited area of domestic features in the east-centre of the excavated strip, of late Hellenistic to Roman date (# 363), shows that non-funerary activity inside this zone did continue – which is not surprising when we consider the Roman-era use of the theatre in the northern part of the extension, and the possible location of the 'Italian' gymnasium in this district (see Chapter 4, p. 183; Chapter 7, p. 237). If, however, we accept the likelihood of a gate in the western extension wall, and a major tomb and some domestic walls running in a straight line from here to the east, then it is very possible that the modern road had an ancient forebear; the domestic traces might then be connected to a major route, rather than indicating that the extension zone remained part of the built-up area of an enlarged city. Within the fortified area were excavated a well-built cist tomb with a paved floor, dated to the third century BC, and a massive concreted pebble foundation, plausibly the base for a major Roman funerary monument (a similar but smaller foundation was identified in our earlier architectural survey, Chapter 4, Site (50)). These two discoveries confirm a progressive contraction of the city boundaries, by Late Hellenistic times, back to their original confines south of the Kanavaris.

For the moment, a provisional reconstruction would run as follows:

1. In an early phase of urbanization, perhaps in the later Archaic phase of the sixth century BC, to judge from other cities of southern Mainland Greece, the several dispersed hamlets of earlier centuries, to both north and south of the river, coalesced into a single agglomeration. This lay south of the river, forming the rough rounded oblong shown in the earlier plan (Fig. 3.63). The trans-Kanavaris area remained in use, but now only for extramural cemeteries and perhaps also sanctuaries, whereas the earlier Geometric foci had perhaps incorporated domestic as well as funerary use. Excavations and surveys at other cities, along with historical sources, all suggest that besides sepulchral and sacral zones, such areas might also contain industrial features and gardens.
2. At some point in the era after the end of the Theban Hegemony around 338 BC, yet most likely

before the Third Macedonian War of 171–168 BC and the subsequent shrinkage of the city, a town extension wall was laid out north of the river, enclosing a hill at the southern end of the modern village of Thespies and, for the first time, creating an acropolis adjacent to the city. To judge by the ceramic finds from the western and central parts of the new enclosure, this vicinity may have enjoyed domestic and other uses during Hellenistic times. The evidence includes a suggestion of burial incursion, on the western side, from perhaps around 200 BC, but the rescue excavation of the Ephoreia in the south-central area indicates probable revival of burial revival a little earlier, by the mid-third century BC. We shall shortly see how the finds from the 1985–86 urban survey might fit in with this evidence, but it appears likely that some non-funerary use of the trans-Kanavaris zone continued into the Early Roman Imperial era. But the eastern part of the newly enclosed sector we consider to have remained in use, throughout historical antiquity, primarily for burial and/or extramural sanctuary purposes.

3. In the final Hellenistic period and during earliest Roman Imperial times, the city shrank and, at least by Early Roman times, this extension apparently lost its (perhaps never more than partial) domestic activity, already apparently lying outside the official boundary of the town. The theatre, however, remained, apparently in active use till at least the second century AD. Whatever its origins, its conversion to stone would be expected to date to late Classical or Hellenistic times, as in other Boeotian towns (Chapter 4, pp. 182–3). Such a date would also fit well with the creation of an extended fortification, reaching beyond and enclosing this monument. Perhaps the most convincing evidence for the reality of the stone theatre, despite the lack of remains at the actual site, is the abundant evidence of stone seating recorded and collected by Stamatakis (Chapter 4, p. 160).
4. Probably from Middle Hellenistic times onwards, and extending right down to Late Roman times, extramural activity including burial was revived in the former urban extension. It is surely significant that, when the new enceinte of Late Antiquity, the *Kastro*, was created, it marked a return to the western core of the Late Hellenistic to Late Roman occupied zone, south of the river, and on the suspected site of the Classical *agora*. No use whatever was made of the Hellenistic acropolis fortifications, despite the obvious tactical advantages of the hill-top over the weak strategic location on the gentle slopes of the *Kastro*.

We can now proceed with the main discussion of the period, noting to what extent the detail of the urban survey supports or challenges this long-term reconstruction. The Transects, Samples and Merged maps for this generic 'Classical/Hellenistic' age cover finds of fine, medium-quality and coarse wares from the early fifth century down to, most likely, around 150/100 BC. In his first study of our material, John Hayes recognized a subsequent Hellenistic ceramic phase in Boeotia, 'Hellenistic/Roman' or Late Hellenistic to Early Roman, then conventionally dated between *c*. 200 BC and AD 200 and strongly represented in the city site of Thespiai. This again includes non-fine wares as its chief component and was therefore, at the very least, a good guide to the location and density of activity during the Late Roman Republic and the early centuries of the Roman Empire. As an external check on this broad chronology, the fact that this 'Hellenistic/Roman' is virtually absent at another of our surveyed towns, Haliartos, destroyed in 171 BC, pushes its initial development in Boeotia down into the middle years of the second century BC at the earliest, so anticipating more recent research that shifts the Middle to Late Hellenistic transition to the second half of the second century BC.

The maps for Classical/Hellenistic (Fig. 3.61) and Archaic/Hellenistic (Fig. 3.62) have, beyond their different densities, a broadly similar appearance, but a problematic one. If we begin with what we consider to have been the core areas of the city, both before and during this period, there is a wide but by no means dense cover of finds within and to the east of the *Kastro*, without any clear foci. Further to the north towards the Kanavaris, the deposition becomes denser. Then, immediately to the west of the *Kastro*, an extremely dense spread starts to appear on the Classical/Hellenistic map, but at the expense of thinner patches to the north-west and south-west. If this covers the urban core, then it contains some remarkably divergent densities.

Let us next turn to the putative extramural sectors. We have very strong deposition in the further west, which we have indicated (p. 90) as a long-standing, north–south-running burial zone; but no clear gap can be observed here between this and the intramural western suburbs. North of the Kanavaris, the dense central cluster fits well within the supposed lines of the (at least partly contemporary) extension wall, yet the western half of the extension has comparatively few finds in comparison. Further to the east, there is a slightly less dense spread running continuously to the eastward limit of the grid, which may represent a combination of material from Classical graves (throughout) with that from the temporary domestic and public expansion of the city north of the river in Late Classical and/or Hellenistic times. More important, a provisional dating of

the finds revealed in January 2008, in the cross section at a building site for the small modern factory here (Chapter 4, p. 171), by Vladimir Stissi, assigned them essentially to the Hellenistic period, extending perhaps down into the first century BC but no later. The other, less dense but still numerous Classical/Hellenistic finds lying further to the east and, probably or certainly, outside the new wall, should be primarily from burials.

When we return south of the Kanavaris, the strong concentration in the far south of the city grid should represent extramural burial, but the finds from immediately outside the later *Kastro* wall to its south-west are better explained as a part of the general occupation zone stretching from here westwards. In the far east finds are thin, surprisingly so in the light of the contemporary off-site scatters in the countryside, found to be especially dense in this direction from the city (see again Fig. 3.36). But this echoes the finer-detailed, if thinner, evidence for the Classical period proper, where it seemed that this area, an important focus in Early Iron Age and Archaic times, had fallen out of favour. Yet here, in the outer fringes of the grid where the finds were considered to be non-urban, the samples collected, though hardly impressive, are rather too heavy for manuring debris: we suspect a continued funerary use of this rectangular block of units at the eastern extremity. Though this is far from demonstrable, it is worth noting that much further to the east, a roadside Classical cemetery was revealed in the course of the excavation of the state war grave or Polyandrion, well off the city grid map.

More circumstantially, a few Transect collections, usually with collections of Archaic to Classical fine ware of unusual quality and in good condition, were picked out in the initial comments of the field walkers and ceramic specialists as likely cemetery material: the three strongest clusters of these lay precisely in the far western, the southern, and here in the far eastern extremities of the grid. Finally, the recent fieldwork by our Slovenian colleagues, deliberately undertaken without use of the surface survey as a guide, has independently confirmed a funerary use of many of the areas which we had postulated as extramural burial sectors (see Chapter 4, pp. 183–8).

A distribution map for the elaborate Classical to Early Hellenistic drinking cup called the *kantharos* is potentially helpful here (Fig. 3.64). This shape was especially popular in Boeotia, less common elsewhere, and appears to have been primarily associated with cult and burial; but it is also found in domestic contexts where it probably had a ceremonial and/or ritual significance (Mulder 2012). If we compare it to the hypothetical infrastructure of the Classical town, we see that most finds are indeed in the peripheral funerary areas; but there are lesser but not insignificant numbers of *kantharoi* within the city, including the area of the *agora*, the

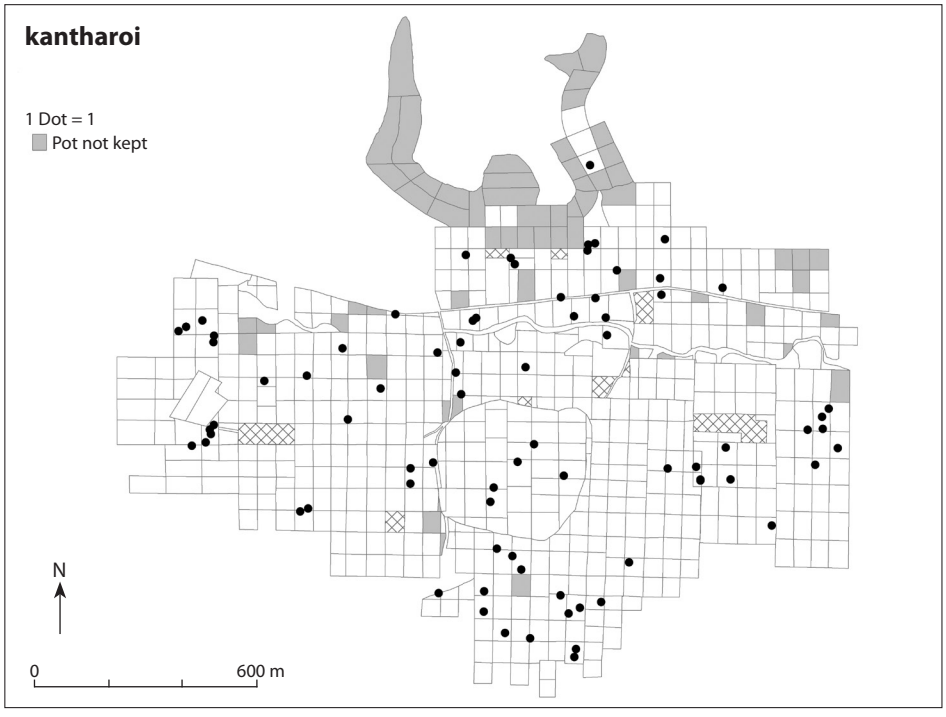


Figure 3.64. *Distribution of kantharoi within the city grid.*

later *Kastro*. This at any rate does nothing to undermine the other evidence for locating the cemetery zones.

If a map were to be drawn of the Classical city, based only on Figs. 3.60–3.62 and without any additional information, its likely boundaries would exclude the *Kastro* and most of the areas to the east of it, along with much of the far east and the far west of the trans-Kanavaris sector; the city itself would be concentrated immediately to the west, north and south-west of the *Kastro*, extending to the limits of the city grid in these directions, and extending also to the central and eastern zones across the Kanavaris. It would thus include all the densest zones of Classical/Hellenistic finds, even though in our view only the inner parts of this vast zone were actually part of the built-up area of the city; the comparable densities in the outer parts would represent extramural burial, and perhaps sanctuary, use, at least until the trans-Kanavaris sector was taken in with the building of the new extension wall.

A series of arguments, centred on taphonomy, can be combined to explain why such a pattern would be misleading. As a first point, the Classical Greek *agora*, probably to be located within and perhaps slightly beyond the *Kastro*, would no doubt have been kept relatively clean and free of domestic debris. This argument certainly finds support in the results of our (not yet published) urban survey of the city of Hyettos: here, the *agora* – located by the earlier discovery of an inscription (Etienne and Knoepfler 1976: 151–76) – is associated with a similar zone of relatively low finds, despite lying at the heart of the town. At Thespiai, this part of the city had, by Late Roman times, become a fortified enclosure with a different range of uses – military, industrial, if also religious – as well as being the focus of densest human activity in the entire town. There is no reason to think that then the maintenance of a clean public space would any longer have a high priority, which in itself would tend to deflate the surface counts of the earlier Classical/Hellenistic era.

It is time to bring out certain key chronological factors by reintroducing our earlier Sector Analysis (pp. 44–8, Figs. 3.29–30 and p. 83, Table 3.6). Here we showed the swamping effect of the diminished Roman and Late Roman town on the relatively thinner spreads of Archaic/Classical/Hellenistic material in the *Kastro* and to its east.

There remains the abiding problem of the difficulty in identifying an adequate provision of cemeteries for the Greco-Roman city. The contrast with the rural sector is, as we have seen, not an absolute one, and at earlier stages there have been a few definite hints, from the field teams and the pottery specialists, pointing out localities in the survey grid where graves and/or sanctuaries might lie. Even if some of our postulated burial areas have escaped such recognition, the overall scale of the suggested cemeteries must fall, in total, very far short of the expectations raised by our earlier rough calculation (pp. 56–9) of the theoretically possible numbers of burials.

This remains a disturbing anomaly and at this point we cannot provide any clear answers. It is however worth investigating some possibly relevant factors. One clue might lie in the fact that a strong contrast exists between the last two cumulative 'merged' maps, that for the Classical and that for the Classical/Hellenistic finds. The former shows much the more balanced distribution of sherds between the supposed urban and extramural sectors: the latter has a much higher overall density, but the distribution, very uneven in several respects, does show a higher representation in some (but not all) of the putative burial zones. If, as we have argued, burial finds would tend to preserve diagnostic wares better than the invariably disturbed and often overlaid domestic contexts, then this is a surprising outcome, for the Classical map depends more heavily on clearly diagnostic pieces. Other questions also relate to burial taphonomy: are the typological distinctions, between the pottery actually from inside the graves and that left on the ground above and around them in the course of funerary rituals, of a kind likely to be reflected in the surface finds? Is the depth of graves below the land surface related to the complexity of the tomb, so that the more elaborate tend to lie below the plough-soil and are thus hardly ever touched by cultivation? The recently excavated examples around ancient Tanagra, and the few recently exposed tombs now recorded by Božidar Slapšak's survey team, at least suggest an affirmative answer to this latter question.

One other element might be considered. The likely area for urban peripheral cemeteries is also that most liable to have been affected by urban manuring and rubbish disposal. As the study of the rural sector to the south of the city showed (*Testing the Hinterland*: 23–37), this latter was an activity heavily concentrated in time, within the broadly Classical to Hellenistic Greek period. Now our examination of the putative burial zones around the city perimeter has shown that, here too, there is an invariable predominance of 'Greek' material, though with a substantial minority of 'Roman' and, in some areas, of Medieval and Ottoman finds. Is it possible that a close juxtaposition of urban manuring and extramural cemeteries has 'contaminated' the burial débris on the city outskirts and made its appearance less distinctive? The main objection to this surmise is that cemetery areas tended to remain, for long periods, sequestered from agricultural use: indeed in the rural sector, where the off-site density is anyway much lower and the pockets of fine ware

indicating burials are that much more visible, we turned to this very factor to explain the fact that cemetery sites often exhibited a density *lower* than that of the surrounding off-site scatter.

Yet we need not imagine that the extramural cemeteries formed unbroken blocks, of such an extent as almost to cut off access to the city. Moreover, there is the anomaly already commented on (pp. 91, 97) that the Classical/Hellenistic finds are surprisingly thin at the eastern extremity of the grid, especially when compared to the great clusters in the west, north and south; but that, just beyond the limits of the city grid in this direction, the manuring densities found in our rural survey were exceptionally high. Our view that this burial zone remained in use for much of antiquity, but at a much lower level than that of the other city borders, would imply that this zone at least could have seen some intermingling of cemeteries with rural life.

This view finds support from our belated realization, in August 2007, that the Classical monument and burial-ground for the city's war dead, the Polyandrion, which is placed 'a little to the East of the settlement' by Fossey (1988: 137), in fact lies so far beyond the urban zone that even the eastern sector of our rural survey did not quite reach it: the distance from the north-eastern corner of the *Kastro* circuit is 1100 m. What is important here is that the monument, whose exceptional status might otherwise be thought to explain its unusual location, was also associated with a larger cemetery, flanking the course of a major road running eastwards. This may be an exceptionally far-flung location for a city cemetery, but it is instructive in two different ways. First, it shows that the spread of urban burial can be expected to reach a distance of up to a kilometre into the rural territory. Secondly, it provides a clear instance of the juxtaposition of a cemetery with a focus of agricultural activity, in the form of the large Classical rural Site LSE 1 nearby. The spatial definition of this cemetery, rather than being evenly two-dimensional, was evidently a linear one, forming a ribbon that cut through the farm-land. There is every reason to expect that similar patterns would occur closer to the city. But even where cemeteries did not directly flank roads, they would be made up of a series of discrete areas rather than long, wide, unbroken blocs. Between the grave zones must have lain arable fields, heavily manured in the Classical/Hellenistic era and, if close to the city, perhaps also places of simple waste dumping in Roman times. Additional support comes from just at the edge of the opposite, western end of the city grid, where we discovered in rural survey a broadly Classical cemetery, the 'Thespiai West Cemetery' (see *Testing the Hinterland*: 84).

Data gathered since 2000 in our survey at another Boeotian city, Tanagra, may offer striking confirmation of this model. Fig. 3.65 shows a pattern of extramural density at Tanagra similar to that found in the survey of the city and its southern approaches at Thespiai.

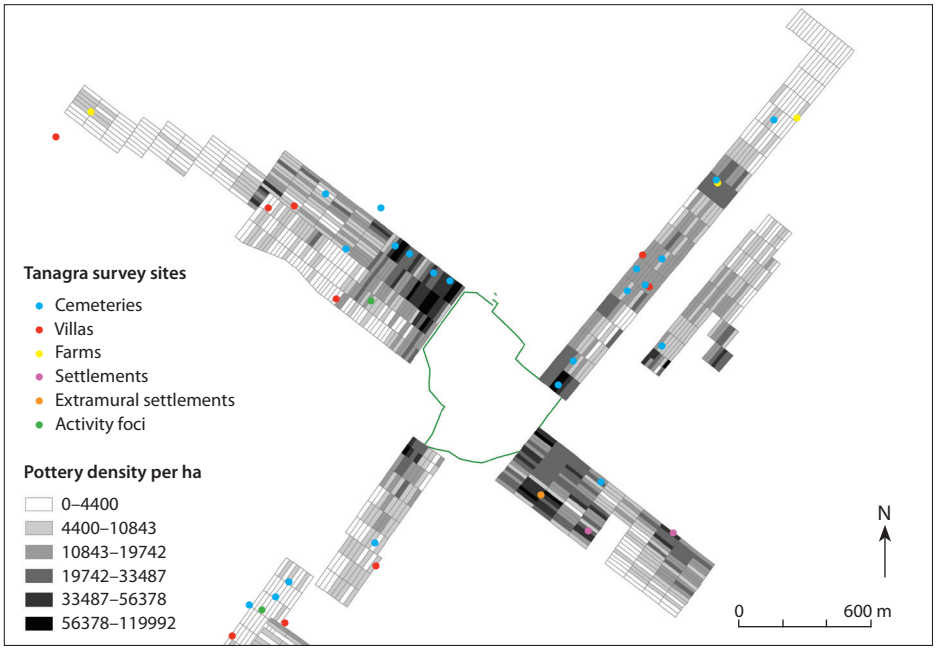


Figure 3.65. *A sector of the survey in the territory of Tanagra, showing the sherd densities decreasing radially from the ancient city.*

Heavy deposition of off-site finds extends for almost 2 km out from the Late Roman city wall; but within this zone, the blue dots mark definite or likely cemeteries of broadly Classical age (although the two marked closest to the north-east of the Late-Roman city-wall are now believed to be, rather, sanctuaries). Subsequent transects from the northern and western territory located further grave clusters. It is clear that such high overall 'periurban' densities cannot represent merely the cemeteries, since they cover several square kilometres. We can add that the relative ease of locating graves at Tanagra arises from the notorious history of (mostly illegal) excavation around the city, primarily carried out in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, in the search for figurines (Higgins n.d.: 27–31, 39–62). From contemporary accounts, it is clear that the landscape surrounding the ancient walled town was densely filled with cemeteries over wide areas: it is thanks to the dumping of unwanted fine-ware pottery around the thousands of graves that were then dug up that we can recognize so many of them in survey. It is a fair generalization, from both the Tanagra evidence and that of the Polyandrion area at Thespiai, that Boeotian suburban and rural cemeteries lay in dispersed groups around the cities, most densely in the immediate vicinity of the town walls, decreasing in density with distance, until they reappear as small clusters linked to discrete rural estates. They are interspersed with farmed areas, spread with sherds representing the ancient manuring which was most intensely focused in the inner *chora* of Classical Boeotian towns.

Thus the intense agricultural fertilization, through manuring, of Classical times, between and around the cemeteries, may well have had a strong impact on the surface evidence from these extramural foci. But a significant contribution must also have been made by the extensive urban grave zones. These could rise and decline in popularity, as indicated by shifting foci of suspected burial material between periods; but quantities of disturbed grave goods, with perhaps an added element of pottery from grave-side rituals, must inescapably be present in the material. This explanation leaves unanswered the problem of reconciling this model with the purely 'Classical' maps, whose distribution, again usually of finer wares, runs more evenly across the whole urban zone. The issue can profitably be revisited when we consider the maps of the later historical eras, below.

We have long argued (since Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988a, in fact), that survey sites can be broken down into a core, a halo and, in certain periods, an off-site zone of impact that can stretch to much longer distances. To the built-up core of the Classical–Hellenistic city of Thespiai must now be added a massive off-site carpet, of many square kilometres, in its surrounding countryside. The inner halo, we have already suggested, ran through or between the peripheral cemeteries; but how far did it run beyond them? Fig. 3.36 extends the city grid maps, at the same density levels that we have been using so far, but into the wider hinterland of the city.

We shall presently revisit the conclusion, established in *Testing the Hinterland*: 23–37, that the dated off-site material for the area shown contains only minimal contributions from periods other than the generic 'Greek'; so we can be fairly certain that the spread of higher density grades, above the light green, around the city core must be essentially due to Classical–Hellenistic ceramic disposal. The area revealed is much larger than that we have assigned to peripheral cemeteries, and should define a wider zone of burials, gardens, and maybe occasional habitation (we well know that survey does not reveal every small farm in a given season). This band extends significantly beyond the city grid. A final comment is that the addition of the possible Archaic material (Fig. 3.62) to the Classical–Hellenistic map would bring little modification to this general picture, apart from the much higher density found in the far eastern burial zone, which points to a decline in the use of this locality after Archaic times.

It remains to give an estimate of the maximum size of the city, including its partially settled northern extension, to represent the period from the later Classical to the earlier Hellenistic, *c*. 400 to 150/100 BC. This is also the period for which ancient sources indicate that the *polis* of Thespiai, town and country, achieved its largest population (*Testing the Hinterland*: 143–51). The vastly greater body of data from the urban site – freshly re-dated ceramics, inscriptions, architecture and historical research – has enabled a far more thorough analysis than that presented in the first Boeotia monograph. There we estimated a maximum built-up area of 95 ha, with a reduction in Late Hellenistic and Early Roman times to 42 ha and a slight recovery in Late Roman times to 48 ha.

We can now reduce all but the first of these figures significantly. The peak of expansion as far as the walled zone still covers some 98 ha, close to our older figure; but when account is now taken of the zone most likely in actual occupation, this will reduce our total to an area of some 72 ha, and we shall shortly be lowering the figures for the two subsequent urban phases by a similar amount. On the customary calculation of around 125 people per hectare for the total urban area (cf. Bintliff 1997b; *Testing the Hinterland*: 144), we arrive at a maximum city population of some 9000 people. If, however, we reduce the city walled zone to its extent *before* the postulated late Hellenistic

extension, we are left with a mere 57 ha, which would work out at around 7125 people. These empirical figures from the ceramic survey need to be brought into confrontation with the historical sources discussed elsewhere in this volume (Chapters 5, 6).

The Thespian citizen army figures for the early fifth century BC already suggest a total population of at least 12,000 (Chapter 5, p. 203). Since both the Archaic city and its countryside appear to be less densely occupied than they were in the Classical and earlier Hellenistic era, the figure for this phase, at the transition from final Archaic to early Classical, must allow for subsequent increase in population to the much higher levels accepted for the later fifth and especially the fourth century BC. In fact, the numbers for each period become fully credible only if, as is likely, Thespiai then already controlled a wider territory than its own discrete *chora*, covering not only second-order centres such as Askra and Eutresis, but also Chorsiai, Siphai and Thisbe which, especially later, are all known to have functioned as independent *poleis*. Askra, from our preliminary estimate (subject to revision), may have covered some 10 ha in Classical times; for Chorsiai and Siphai, around 1.7 and 3 ha respectively have been suggested; for Eutresis perhaps 16.5 ha; while Thisbe was a substantial town at around 47 ha (Bintliff 1997b; Hansen 1996: 83, 103, 112; Fossey (ed.) 1981: 12 for a slightly higher figure than Hansen's for Chorsiai). Adding these estimates for Classical times to that for Thespiai itself, we reach a minimum urban coverage of some 135 ha, of which Thespiai would represent 42 per cent. It must be added, however, that additional villages in the territories of Thespiai and Thisbe may await discovery, not least in the extensive areas most distant from either centre, such as the valley where the modern villages of Ellopia and Xeronomi lie. Indeed, recent rescue work not far from there, near the abandoned Medieval and Ottoman village of Tatiza, suggests a community of some importance. We perhaps should allow for an additional two or three villages of perhaps 3 ha each, increasing the hypothetical total to 144 ha. The density of small farms, documented in our survey of Thespiai's southern hinterland, is too slight to demand any increase in our totals to allow for their populations, given the undoubted margins of error for the towns and villages. Since we do not have the same detailed evidence for the satellite cities, caution is necessary; but it does look as if, at all times when these other centres are recorded as being under Thespian control by our ancient sources, Thespiai's city population needs to be multiplied significantly.

On the view that early fifth-century Thespiai had yet to reach its full 57 ha maximum, the population of approximately 7000 suggested for this general era might need to be lessened still further if we allow for population growth from the time of our earliest source in 480/479 BC; we might also hypothesize that its satellites were less populous at this early date. If Thespiai proper were really contributing only some 42 per cent of the total army muster, this would predict a population of some 5250 for the city itself. If we apply this estimated, historically derived early fifth-century total to the old Classical city south of the river, we find that some 76 per cent of the later urban area would have been occupied by this date. We must allow for the many uncertainties in all these estimates, but the results of the calculations, still sensibly less than those implied by the full extent of the mature Classical cities, seem to be of a reasonable order of magnitude.

The League constitution recorded by the 'Oxyrhynchus Historian' soon after 400 BC suggests that Thespiai would be able to muster a total army of some 4200 men, which on customary formulae would imply a total population of around 21,000 (including women and children and an average of one household slave per family). If we now allow for the full 57 ha for Thespiai and the full estimated Classical extent of its satellites, the total of 144 ha might house approximately 18,000 people. When we consider that the League's muster is prescriptive, dealing in round numbers and on a very general scale rather than recording those actually present, then any need for adjustment is easily explained.

Rather similar figures have been calculated for the earlier Hellenistic era, notably from an ephebic or new citizen recruit list of around 250 BC which, with others of the same era, suggests an average annual enrolment of some 70 young men into the middle and upper class citizen militia (cf. Chapter 6, pp. 221–2). This figure might yield a total of around 19,000 inhabitants, but there is ample room for error in extrapolating from such small numbers: the fuller series of lists shows considerable variation from year to year. By this date, we suspect that the extended *enceinte* of Thespiai will have been created and partially occupied, increasing our built-up area to 72 ha. We do not so far have evidence of a parallel expansion for Thisbe, the largest of its satellites, so probably we should retain the area figures for the other towns, to give a total of 159 ha or perhaps around 19,875 people – very close again to the historical estimate. The outstanding richness of the public and private (especially funerary) epigraphic records from Hellenistic Thespiai are also consonant with a period of prosperity (Chapters 5, pp. 213–4 and 6). The evidence of coinage (Grandjean, Chapter 14) also points to the Classical to Early-to-Middle

Hellenistic era as the period of maximum coin use, especially the third century.

Satisfactory as this might seem, a problem emerges immediately. The re-founding of the Boeotian Confederacy in Hellenistic times gave each of 16 poleis of the League its nominal independence; in theory, therefore, Thespiai possessed only Askra, Eutresis and maybe a village or two lying between it and Thisbe, yielding an 'urban' area of, at the most, some 108 ha, which might imply some 13,500 inhabitants – only just over two-thirds (71 per cent) of the estimate based on the contemporary recruitment lists. But there are very good reasons to believe that Thespiai had in fact regained control over Thisbe and its other urban satellites: this was true not only for Early Imperial times (Müller, (Chapter 7, p. 234) but, according to Denis Knoepfler (2000, 2001, 2002), was a corollary of its earlier status in holding a full 1/7th share in the composition of the Confederacy, with the same rank as Thebes and Tanagra. To sum up the topic of urban demography, we suggest that the population of the town rose from *c*. 5250 in late Archaic–Early Classical times, through *c*. 7125 for the Late Classical period, to reach an unparalleled peak of *c*. 9000 people by Early Hellenistic times.

We cannot leave this 'Classical to Hellenistic' period without making brief reference to the series of catastrophes that the city suffered in this time, at the hands of its various enemies (Chapter 5), from the slaughter of its hoplite force at Thermopylai in 480 BC and the subsequent Persian sack, to the forced depopulation of the city after the battle of Leuktra in 371. Unfortunately survey archaeology has its strength, not in the field of short-term events and processes, but in Braudel's *moyenne durée*, extending over periods of several centuries at least, (Snodgrass 1991; Bintliff 2010). This is why even such major disasters usually remain hidden from the surface record, with its wider chronological scale (see also V. Stissi's comments in Chapter 11). But as we have also observed elsewhere (Chapter 5, pp. 214–7), what is remarkable is that the city appears to have recovered so relatively quickly, renewing its prosperity after these severe setbacks. In time, we find the city lending money to Athens in 229 BC and a rich female private citizen providing a large sum to the town of Orchomenos a decade later. If such glimpses of Thespian wealth are confined to the dominant upper class of the city, the growing international appeal of the Mouseia festival, controlled by Thespiai in the Valley of the Muses, is likely to have brought broader public benefits, especially after its elevation to the select group of Panhellenic 'stephanic' festivals in the 220's (Müller 1996 and Chapter 7 in this volume). These benefits materialized in the monumentalization of the Muses Sanctuary, probably in the later third century BC (Osborne in Chapter 6, p. 224).

A striking example of the converse state of affairs is that the most prominent adverse episode that *is* reflected in the surface record, shortly to be described under the ensuing eras, so far lacks any clear historical causation sufficient to account for its severity.

Early Hellenistic (and 'Early Hellenistic?'), Middle Hellenistic (and 'Middle Hellenistic?') and Late Hellenistic (and 'Late Hellenistic?') plus Middle–Late Hellenistic (Fig. 3.66)

Historians were long accused of neglecting the Hellenistic era in favour of the Archaic and Classical periods, and the same charge has been more justifiably laid against the study of its ceramic assemblages. But whereas current academic trends, driven not least by contemporary concerns with multiculturalism and globalization, have led to a vigorous surge of interest in Hellenistic history, the same cannot be said of ceramic studies in the period, which remain something of a 'Cinderella' field. Some useful, as yet unpublished recent research by Mark van der Enden explores the effects of this limitation for the classification of Hellenistic pottery, in respect of this and other Aegean survey projects (2008). Differentiation between the domestic and coarse wares of the Hellenistic era – apart from some 'type fossil' forms, mostly of the Late Hellenistic sub-phase – is still at an early stage, with the bulk of finds assignable only to the broad cross-period category 'Classical–Hellenistic'.

In our case, the 'Early Hellenistic' and 'Middle Hellenistic' are both classifications based on special fine wares, of which clearly very few indeed were recognized: the finds are all single, and occur in areas of varied context. As often noted, Greek fine wares in general change more frequently, and so provide closer dating, than their accompanying domestic and coarse wares. But in reality the latter will always provide the bulk of the assemblages, and some of them show little change, from the Archaic right through into the Late Hellenistic era. So in making a map of the finds clearly datable to this short era, between the outer limits of *c*. 323 and 150/100 BC, we have to make do with the smallest tip of an iceberg. In fact, the finds for 'Early Hellenistic' and 'Middle Hellenistic' (Fig. 3.66), whether taken separately or together, are simply too thin for anything substantial to be said about them.

In 'Late Hellenistic', however (grouped on the same map), we have a relatively short phase which has become far better known in recent years, and our map has a somewhat better spread of finds, enough to invite analysis. In Fig. 3.66, we have added in an outline that separates off the denser scatter of Late Hellenistic

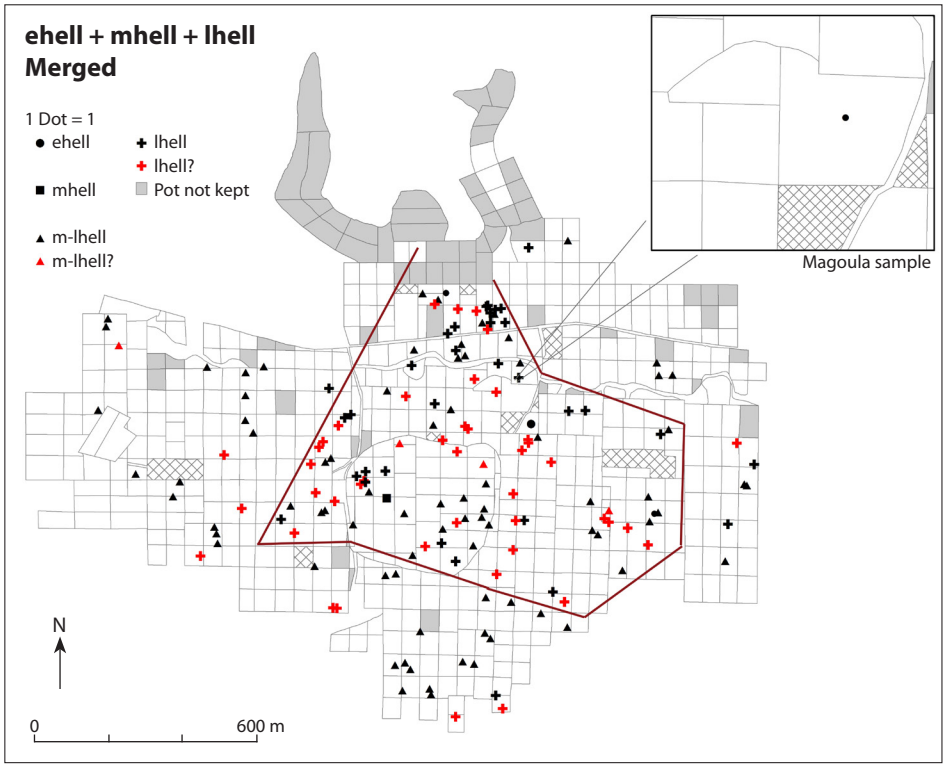


Figure 3.66. *Distribution of Early, Middle and Late Hellenistic sherds, with an added outline defining the area of denser scatters.*

sherds, excluding only some isolates. The period is clearly focused in a coherent block, running from a small western extension to the *Kastro*, a wider spread to its east, and an extension up to and across the Kanavaris in the central sector of the grid units there. Outside this block, the few finds in the outer west, south, north-east and far east, can mostly be assigned to the continued use of established cemetery zones there. The few remaining pieces from between the core area and the peripheral cemetery zones might be seen as 'urban halo' (rubbish dumping, market gardens, semi-rural habitation, shrines etc.). But, with a relatively small number of sherds, weighted towards special and more easily identifiable types and covering a rather short phase of at most 150 years, it is difficult to divide such a map, even hypothetically, into discrete functional zones, the traditional cemetery areas excepted. The especial importance assigned to this phase is as marking a decisive contraction of the built-up town, in the final century-and-a-half of the millennium.

Despite the difficulty imposed by these limited data, however, one category still appears to be informative: the small oil flasks or *unguentaria* from our survey, which appear to be datable essentially to the Middle to Late Hellenistic era (Fig. 3.67). Although also used in the home as ointment and perfume containers, they have a special role in burial rites and gifts, not unlike that of the *kantharos* in the preceding era. Perhaps the best comparison for their distribution would be with a later map for 'Hellenistic to Roman' times (Fig. 3.74) where we have constructed a hypothetical urban infrastructure plan that we infer to be valid too for the immediately preceding Late Hellenistic era. Within the shrunken town, finds are mostly focused in the *agora* area, where these items could perhaps have been especially used in ceremonial or ritual activities. Beyond that core zone, *unguentaria* are especially common in the peripheral southern, western and northern cemetery zones. A scatter midway between the burial and occupation areas, the areas that we have just suggested might belong to 'urban halo', may also, given the particular role of these vessels in burial rituals, mark the intrusion of some funerary activity into zones which had been part of the built-up area in high Classical times. This is especially possible to the south of the *agora*, and to its west – where we shall shortly see a sign of the same process in the form of a possible Roman funerary monument. Study of the total Hellenistic assemblage by Vladimir Stissi (Chapter 11) also picks out the peripheral cemetery zones we have indicated.

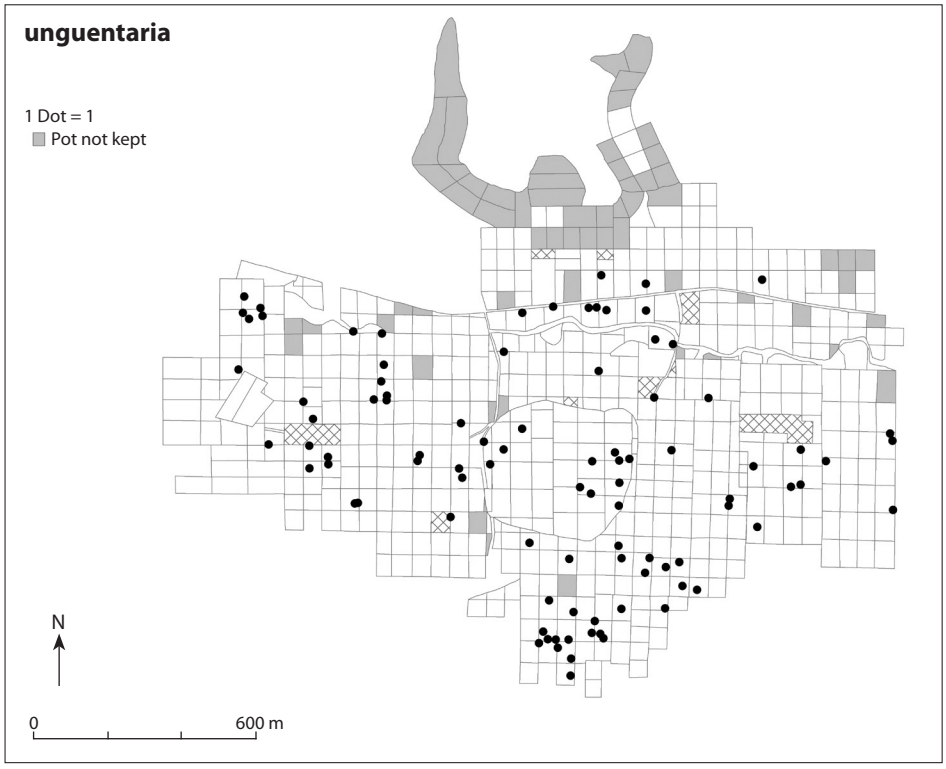


Figure 3.67. *Distribution of unguentaria.*

Thus, whereas the Classical and earlier cemetery evidence came from the periphery of our survey grid, the encroachment of this class of flask, on the western and southern sides of the city, into areas that we had assigned to the urban built-up zone in the preceding period, suggests the beginning of an abandonment of the outer parts of the inhabited area on these sides. This is consistent with the reorientation of the core occupation to the area of the *Kastro* and to its east, a trend that will persist from now to the end of antiquity; and likewise with the evidence from earlier Roman Imperial times for burial in former urban areas, to the inner west and inner north from the *Kastro.*

In the extension zone north of the river, the suggestion of encroachment of burials into parts of this area now find confirmation by Roman times and perhaps even during the Hellenistic era, while the *unguentaria* would suggest a Late Hellenistic spread along the same southern area by the modern road where the recent excavations revealed burials.

Stissi underlines the trend in the city ceramics, with the transition from Classical to Late Hellenistic times, towards a reduction in the range of pot types, a shift to larger-scale production of less sophisticated forms, and a major increase in transport amphorae. He speculates as to whether these changes are signs of a decline in average wealth, and of some reorientation to wider commercial activities, from which élites too may have benefited. These are independent pointers towards the explanation that we shall shortly be offering for the major contraction in urban and rural activity, observable at Thespiai in the final centuries BC and the initial ones of the Christian era.

The remaining ceramic group on Fig. 3.66 is the 'Middle–Late Hellenistic'. As with other overlapping classes, distributions can be helpful in suggesting which of the two periods here combined is more likely to dominate the assemblage. For this group, a distinctly wider spread of finds between the peripheral cemetery zones and the new Late Hellenistic core has been detected: this could point to a predominance in this joint assemblage of the Middle Hellenistic, a period otherwise hard to detect, and thus to a phase before the town contracted from its maximal Classical and Early Hellenistic extent.

At this point it is helpful to move directly to the immediately succeeding period map, that of Imperial Roman, *c*. AD 1 to 300 (Fig. 3.68).

Roman (and 'Roman?') (Fig. 3.68)

This period is taken to extend from approximately AD 1 to 300. Here we are dealing with less specialized

pot forms, more representative of the full range of activities than in some of the phases recently considered, yet still, as Philip Bes's detailed study (Chapter 12) shows, weighted towards fine wares and select types, so probably under-represented numerically: the missing material he believes to lie hidden in the large proportion of generic 'Roman–Late Roman' pottery. In the 'Merged' Fig. 3.68 the city core, as first seen in Fig. 3.66 with its Late Hellenistic focus, reappears, this time more forcefully and with the same foci, especially in the *Kastro* and immediately to its west, within the inner zone to its east, and as a band running from the north-eastern *Kastro* northwards. The outer western cemetery zone is much stronger than in Late Hellenistic times, but this is probably due to the larger number of recognized pieces; that in the far south, by contrast, where the Late Hellenistic was slightly better represented, is now so thin as to be rather uncertain; while the far eastern one has altogether disappeared. North of the Kanavaris, the cemetery area at the eastern extremity, absent in the Late Hellenistic spread, is once again fairly strong; another minor cluster, further north in this eastern sector and most likely beyond the eastern boundary of the city wall extension, is best seen also as burial material. But the strongest deposition is in the central zone, lying well within the line of this wall, and echoing the same feature in the preceding period. The dense spread of finds around the western edges of the *Kastro* continues.

What is most striking, in contrast with the Classical and Earlier Hellenistic distributions, is the sharp diminution of finds in the former outer urban areas, especially in the west and far east of the grid, but also to the immediate south of the *Kastro*. This is marked, first and foremost, by the effective abandonment of the eastern burial zone. A band of increasingly high density does however run from the *Kastro* north to the Kanavaris and across it into the area protected by the city extension wall.

One must bear in mind that the overall total of Early Roman Imperial finds is far lower than that for Classical–Hellenistic times – and this for a period of comparable length. As a subsequent occupation, furthermore, the Roman should have the advantage of overlying the earlier finds and structures, although the further layer of dense Late Roman activity, in the same general areas, will have had some effect on Early Roman sherd counts. It remains clear that, by Roman Imperial times, the city has visibly shrunk in extent and that significant parts of its extramural burial zones have gone out of use. More significant is the fact, evident from the preceding Fig. 3.66, that this change had, to a great extent, already taken shape during the short preceding period of Late Hellenistic, from *c*. 150/100 BC onwards (cross-shaped symbols). Quite independently of the lower sherd numbers, the salient fact is that the picture for the whole period between 150 BC and AD 300, rather than being merely a thinner version of that shown in the Archaic, Classical, or earlier Hellenistic distribution maps, is a radically different one.

Some differences still appear between the Roman map and the Late Hellenistic, and not simply as a result of the increased database. There is slightly more activity in the western cemetery zone; the far eastern cemetery has totally disappeared; the southern cemetery area is more thinly used than before; the far north-eastern burial area across the Kanavaris, by contrast, has come back into use. In the central area of this trans-Kanavaris zone, finds seem to run across the eastern boundary of the city wall extension and it may be that much of this is now cemetery material. This would conform to the discovery, in the new rescue trench to the south beside the modern east–west road, of probable Roman-era burials and a burial monument (see pp. 63, 196–8), also largely within the former city extension sector. But there were probably also other activities in this zone, which seem attested in Roman Imperial times and which would stimulate artefact deposition, mainly in its central zone from the river northwards to the theatre hollow.

These are indicated by consideration of the evidence from the surface architecture and the documentary sources. The 'merged' Fig. 3.68 appears to find support in the comment of Strabo (ix, 2. 25), writing in Augustan times, that Thespiai and Tanagra were the only two cities in Boeotia still to endure, while the rest were 'mere ruins and names'; yet with the significant qualification that even these two were merely 'moderately prosperous'. We must assume that the Greek theatre, located in the hemispherical hollow in the hills and shown on the maps as a rounded northern projection between the two 'horns' of the flanking valleys, was still in active use in Early Roman times, from its mention in the later second century AD by Pausanias (ix, 27.4). Then there is the case of the wealthy Greek member of the élite who paid for a new gymnasium, together with the necessary supplies of oil, for use by the numerous Italian financiers and traders now in the city (*negotiatores*) (Müller 2002, 98, nn. 61, 66 and Chapter 7, pp. 236–8) – in its own right a very important development. The comment is of further interest in that this building may or may not be identical with the 'upper' gymnasium that is mentioned in a second inscription (Müller, *ibid*.). If the city was now contracting, both in its population and in the size of its built-up area, yet the northern area had still to be passed through in order to reach

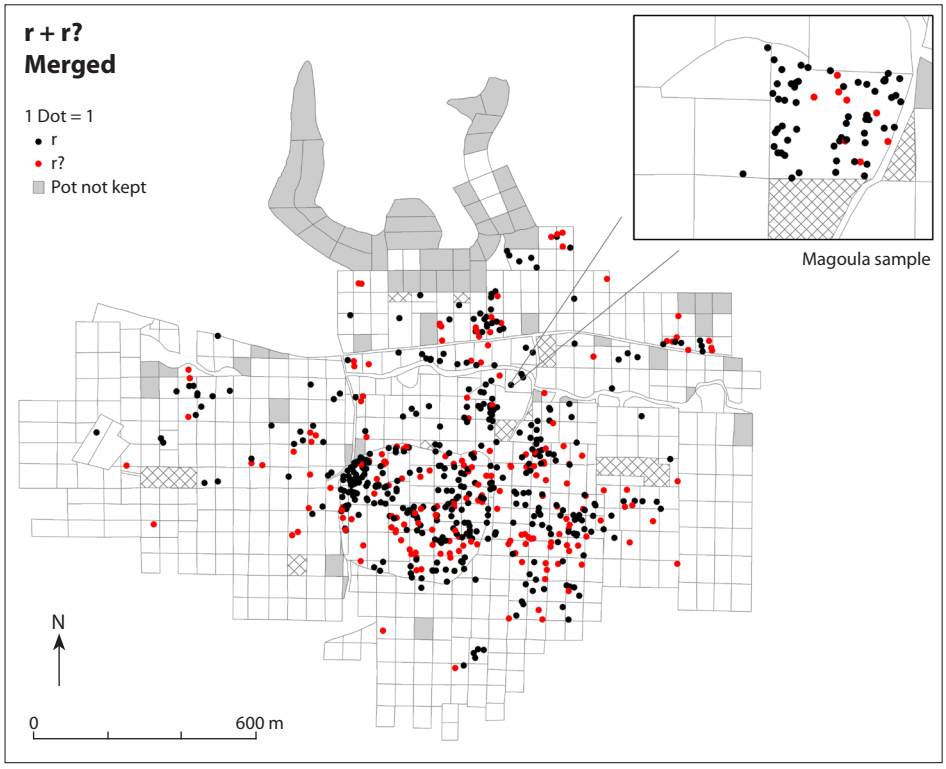


Figure 3.68. *Distribution of Roman (and 'Roman?') sherds.*

the theatre, then the likeliest location for this 'upper gymnasium' might be somewhere on the gently rising ground between the Kanavaris and the theatre, where indeed (at least according to P. Roesch: *IThesp* 136) the second inscription was itself found: see Chapter 4, p. 183). This alternative would be preferable to that of the other area of rising ground, the now apparently 'dead' zone south of the *Kastro*.

Three additional aspects need still need to be considered. First, there is the question where the inhabitants of the Late Hellenistic and Roman town were buried, with, among the inherited areas, little or nothing to show in the far east, limited spreads in the west and south, and by no means extensive finds in the north-east beyond the river. There are attractions in the idea that the contraction in the built-up area, the main feature of the Late Hellenistic and Roman maps, led to colonization of the largely abandoned parts of the former Classical–Hellenistic city by typically suburban uses, among them burials, craft activities or outlying houses. One architecturally interesting discovery could support this idea (Location 18: see Chapter 4, pp. 153–4). Just 150 m or so west of the *Kastro* wall, our survey met with a unique cluster of four large cut slabs, rectangular limestone roofing elements with only partly finished coffered decoration. They had clearly been ploughed up by a farmer and dragged from their original find-spot on to a small ridge at the edge of the cultivated area. An approximate parallel was found in a recently discovered, but undated, coffering block which had been reused as a tomb-cover in the cemetery of ancient Kleonai in the Peloponnese (see again Chapter 4): its conjectured original use was in the roof of a funerary *aedicula*. In our case the presence of four separate blocks suggest a substantial monument. The absolute freshness of our blocks when first discovered, in 1986, indicated that they had only recently been brought to the surface; when taken with their proximity to each other, this suggests that they are not far from their original site. If these inferences are on the right lines, we could be dealing with a monumental Roman tomb monument, set up a mere 100–200 m from what was now the Forum area. This is consonant with our evidence for wealthy Greek and Italian individuals at Thespiai in the Early Roman era and the likely introduction of Roman funerary customs. Parallels nearer to hand may be forthcoming in the suspected funerary monument of Roman date and style, detected within the rescue trench of 2013 beside the modern road just across the Kanavaris – again, not much more than 200 m from the presumed Forum area.

We must clearly entertain the possibility that there had been a major reorganization of the former city, with continuity of use only in its core, in a few of the traditional burial grounds, and at the theatre, but with new uses of space elsewhere. The city extension north of the river may have contained a gymnasium as well as the theatre, both in use, but may also have witnessed a revival of burial, with the encroachment of what had been an extramural activity, not just here but also in areas even closer to the city centre, if our reading of the coffered blocks and the new roadside monument is correct. Whether the clusters of Roman ceramic finds around the coffering blocks and on the line of the modern road across the river mark other burials, sanctuary or residual domestic activity is impossible to judge. But the architectural features clearly imply that both the inner western sector and the strip beside the modern east–west road, no longer formed part of the built-up urban area. The finds in this latter sector give support to the spread of burials through the former city extension, notably in the massive concrete foundation reaching down below the water table (# Ω 43-373 in the report); while the limited building traces at # 363 may have lined a predecessor to the modern east–west road, representing some kind of suburban extramural activity of a domestic or industrial nature.

Relevant, too, is the discovery of the Domitianic inscription, of AD 86 or 87, in the far eastern sector (Schachter and Marchand, 2012: 292–4, no. 5), recording the reconstruction of a building of unknown, but certainly public, use. On the assumption that this too was recovered close to its original location, then here is yet another sector now devoted to non-domestic activity, perhaps most plausibly involving the use of an outlying sanctuary.

One final and notable feature of the Roman Fig. 3.68 is the evidence that derives from the special survey of the prehistoric Magoula. When compared with the Classical, the Hellenistic and the more closely defined later Roman maps, there is an obvious peak in Imperial Roman activity, with minimal deposition of sherds in those earlier and later periods. It is true that the more detailed phases of ER or MR (Fig. 3.75) do not show a parallel spread in this locality, nor do other phases offer any basis for questioning the diagnosticity of the finds. Still, one must infer that there was a major use, conceivably associated with a new temple or other major public building, of this venerable elevated location in the earlier Imperial era. Perhaps this could mark the introduction here of the Imperial cult, if that was not more likely to have been placed in the Forum. Indeed, the limited collections for periods between Neolithic and Roman occupation of the Magoula there may well be a product of the common Roman practice of digging deep foundations for the monuments of this period, thus destroying the occupation layers from the intervening phases. The Magoula hill, as the most prominent elevation within the original city wall, would have made a natural location for a public building in Classical or Hellenistic times, and traces of at least one such structure indeed exist (Chapter 4, Site 30.I and II). If so, the activity did not continue beyond the first centuries of the Empire: no trace of the usually abundant and easily datable Late Roman wares was found on the Magoula.

At this point, however, we must reintroduce what must be a vital corrective to any simple reading of the Late Hellenistic and Roman maps. This derives from the data obtained from the immediate southern hinterland of Thespiai, and published in *Testing the Hinterland*. Figs. 3.69 and 3.70 summarize the contribution made by the sequence of broad generic periods to the very dense off-site scatters characteristic of the landscape around ancient Thespiai.

Remarkably, between 75 and 80 per cent of the off-site scatters proved to be made up of generic 'Greek' sherds, with a very minor contribution from Roman and Late Roman material – and that largely located in the haloes around the rural sites. We have argued that the bulk of this material emanated from the city, in the form of formal rubbish disposal for manuring purposes. Despite the considerable contraction in the extent of the city and by implication in its practice of large-scale rural manuring, so well attested for the preceding population, in Roman and later times, a natural question remains: if the 'Greek' era had now all but ceased, then what would happen to the urban rubbish? Most likely, it was deposited around the city borders and in empty or ruined structures; one thinks naturally of the zones formerly occupied by the large Greek town which now had become disused. This leads us to conclude that in addition to the peripheral cemeteries, including both previously existing ones and new ones located closer to the shrunken town, we can expect to find deposits of urban rubbish, lying between and within these burial zones, and no longer finding its way into the more distant countryside. In the later Fig. 3.75 we have suggested a division of the Roman finds into city core, largely burial zones, and 'city halo' in which sporadic burial, extramural sanctuaries, maybe some semi-rural housing, market gardens and rubbish disposal areas can now be envisaged. In our analysis of the Classical–Hellenistic maps (pp. 91, 98–9 with Fig. 3.61), we found a band of urban halo that included not only the interstices of the peripheral cemeteries, but also a zone extending beyond the city grid and into the

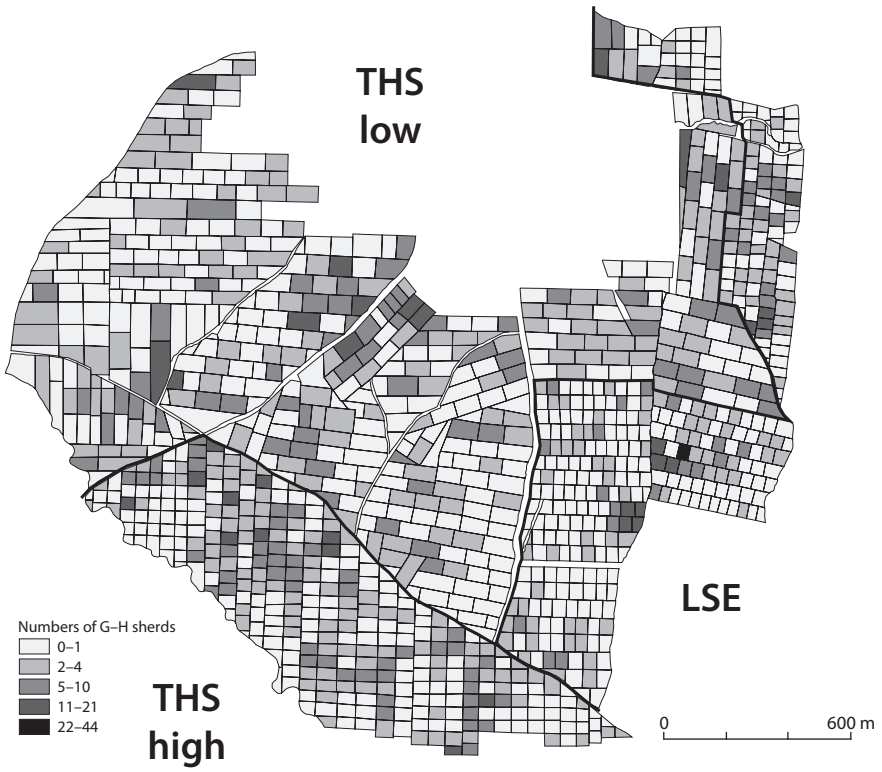


Figure 3.69. *Frequency of sherds per Transect, dated to the very broadly 'Classical Greek' era (Geometric to Hellenistic), from the rural survey area immediately to the south of the city of Thespiai.*

countryside beyond. Since the subsequent, Roman and Late Roman contributions to the off-site material beyond the city grid are minimal, we must accept that the urban rubbish for these 600 or so years was being deposited within the grid and, naturally with the apparent cessation of off-site manuring, at far higher levels than before, when so much of it had found its way up to 2–3 km from the city.

Estimates of the built-up, domestic and public areas of the earlier Roman town will be attempted shortly when we turn to the combined 'Early and Middle Roman' Fig. 3.75, but we can anticipate that discussion by noting that, for the periods of this map, we shall be suggesting a built-up area of some 34 ha. We earlier discussed the densest zone of Late Hellenistic but, for lack of detailed further information, did not try to break this spread up into 'core' and 'urban halo', merely suggesting that this figure should include some 'halo' as well as the city core. It seems reasonable to propose, provisionally, that the town remained of a similar size, as between Late Hellenistic and Middle Roman times. The reciprocal rises and falls, across these two phases, in the use of traditional cemetery zones, which to some extent balance out, would support this. The accepted density estimate of some 125 persons per *total* urban hectare would yield only some 4250 occupants, a huge decline in population, down to less than half of what it had been at the peak expansion of the city in Late Classical and earlier Hellenistic times, when we suggested a figure of approximately 9000 urban inhabitants.

Of documentary sources for population in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, the enrolment records of new army recruits offer the best evidence. As observed elsewhere (Chapter 5, pp. 214, 216; Chapter 6, p. 222), from the late third century BC onwards the numbers of new recruits go into a steepening decline until, by the early second century, they reach figures in the 30s, as compared with the 60s and 70s of a century earlier. Although there could be more than one explanation for this, the visible contraction of the physical extent of the city, between earlier Hellenistic times and the Late Hellenistic phase whose beginning we now date to the second century BC, fully supports belief in such a dramatic drop in population. In other ways, the evidence from coinage (Grandjean, Chapter 14) and the epigraphic record (Müller, Chapter 7) also point

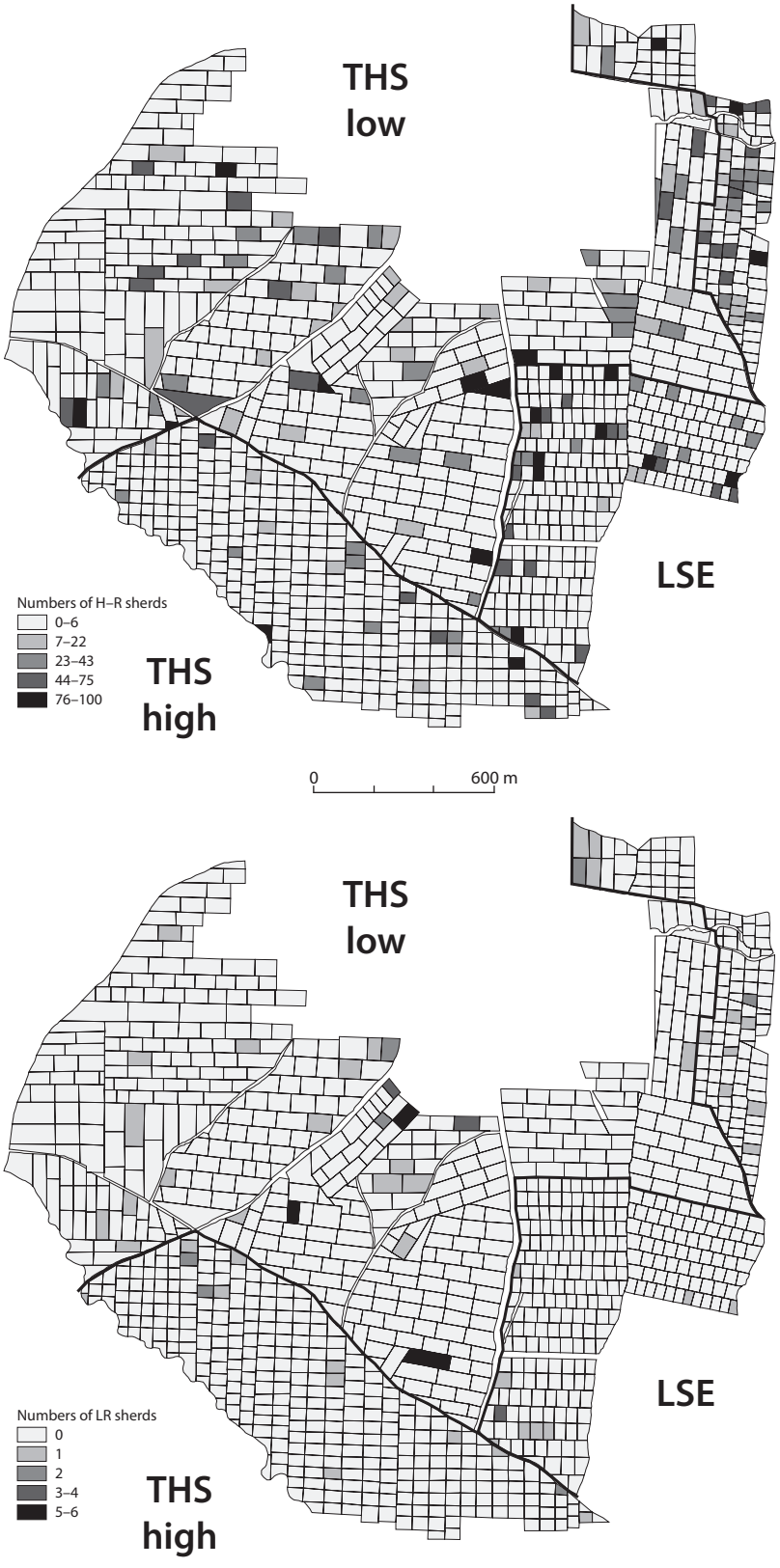


Figure 3.70. *The very much lower counts for the 'Roman' (above) and 'Late Roman' (below) eras.*

to the second century and later as an epoch of decline for the city, giving substance to the (often contested) claims of the ancient historical and geographical writers about the deteriorating quality of life for most people (if not for the élite) in Boeotia.

The account of this period by the historian Polybius is especially problematic (for varying assessments, see Muller 2013; this volume, Chapter 5, pp. 215–18; and Osborne, Chapter 6, pp. 228–9). Polybius launches more than one tirade on Boeotian decline, dating its beginnings from just after the mid-third century BC, reaching a nadir around the end of that century, and improving somewhat in the following one. In the original interpretation of our survey evidence, we found that this gave some support for such a narrative (Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985). But since then, Müller's 2013 article has radically called into question the nature of Polybius's Boeotian diatribes, whose historical roots, such as they are, lie rather in developments of Polybius's lifetime (*c*. 200–120 BC). This agrees very well with the parallel, but quite independent, revision proposed by our current specialists for the pottery chronology and, with it, the lower dating for the more drastic changes observed archaeologically in urban and rural life.

In another paper, Christel Müller (2010) has pointed also to some elements that may have contributed both to social disorder and to the decline of the city. From the third century onwards, there are signs of the agglomeration of property and the accumulation of large personal fortunes among leading citizens of the Boeotian towns, arguably at the expense of the class of independent peasant farmers. Moreover, the terms of the Hellenistic Boeotian Confederacy, as with the far larger and frontier-less Roman Empire which succeeded it, gave scope for the rich to purchase and exploit property across the entire federal province, in contrast to the preceding world of self-contained *poleis*, in which extravagant land ownership was relatively rare and lay outside civic norms.

But there was an even greater force for change, one that acted in a more direct way to reduce the population, rural and urban, on the ground: the brutal and relentless impact of Rome on mainland Greece in the second and first centuries BC. Thespiai, it is true, was skilful or fortunate enough to avoid destructive confrontation with Rome, both in the second century and again, in the following century, when she alone in the region took the side of the ultimate victors in the Mithridatic War. But there must have been major collateral damage to the city and its territory whenever Roman armies and their opponents swept across Boeotia, as repeatedly happened in the final centuries BC. We hear that the Roman general Mummius stripped works of art from Thespiai, when it may have failed to take the Roman side in 146 BC (see Chapter 7, p. 232); but under what other forms of oppression did the city suffer? Plutarch, a native of Chaironeia, in his *Life of Antony* (58) recalls hearing how his great-grandfather suffered under Mark Antony's forced grain requisitions, exacted under threat of the whip and terminated only by the news of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC – a reminder that disaster can take many other forms besides the outright hostile sack of a city. There are, for example, epigraphic hints of a second-century food crisis, in Thespiai and elsewhere, after the dissolution of the Boeotian Confederacy in 171 BC (Müller, Chapter 7, pp. 232, 238 and n.2). It is uncertain how far this last change, which unquestionably led to a total reorganization of political, social and economic life in the cities of this region, directly affected urban life; but it too may have been a factor in the general decline of the towns and their hinterlands which is so clear from archaeology.

Finally, we have suggested in previous publications (summarized in *Testing the Hinterland*: 180), that the very high densities of population in Boeotia around 400 BC, indicated by both historical sources and our field survey data, posed an unsustainable burden on the productivity of the land: such figures were never attained again, for the province as a whole, until the late twentieth century. The immense effort that had to be expended in large-scale fertilization of the countryside with urban waste, which has been documented in our off-site mapping in every city landscape of Boeotia that we have surveyed (Haliartos, Askra, Thespiai, Hyettos, Tanagra, Koroneia), and whose prevalence at Thespiai is firmly dated to the generic 'Greek' era, must surely be understood as a response to the need to produce ever more food, for populations swollen to dangerous levels in relation to local carrying capacity. The virtual disappearance of this practice, apart from localized rural site haloes, by Early Roman times, coincides with the decline in town and country populations. It might of course be argued that it was precisely the disappearance of so many mouths that brought about the ending of this intensive manuring activity; yet the preceding situation had in any case been unsustainable in the long-term.

Whatever the exact nature of the conjuncture between an unsustainable agricultural regime, the expansion of a wealthy land-owning class and the disruption caused by a foreign military and later political presence in the region, it seems nevertheless to be a real one, which led to a profound alteration in the way of life of its citizens. This leaves open the question: what became of the 'missing' population? Luuk de Ligt of the University of Leiden has indicated

(*pers. comm.*) first, the possibility that, in increasingly difficult ecological and economic circumstances such as we have just outlined, the poorer farmers may have adjusted through family limitation, a practice well-attested in the studies of historical demographers (Wrigley 1969, especially Chapter 5). This would leave in place a residue of farmers, now virtually all resident in the city of Thespiai, to work the remaining freehold property and the estates of the rising magnates now attested for this city. Secondly, they could migrate to find better opportunities. Here it has been suggested, notably by Susan Alcock (1993: 96–117), that the decline in many southern Greek rural landscapes is a sign, not of overall demographic collapse, but of a specifically rural depopulation, compensated for by migration into the towns on the part of peasants, displaced by the rise of larger and less labour-intensive estates; and especially into a few growing Roman colonies such as Corinth, Patras and Nicopolis. Yet the empirical evidence of the loss in scale of the other urban centres, recorded in surveys for Early Roman times, is more than enough to dwarf the size of the new Imperial foundations (Bintliff 2012, Ch. 13). Alcock herself admits (1993: 97) that the 'nucleation factor' does not fit the case of Hellenistic and Roman Boeotia. But her general hypothesis of rural emigration can be extended, by suggesting that some of the Greek peasants who disappear from the Roman province of Achaia moved much further afield, perhaps beyond Greece – a thesis that must be testable through epigraphic and other source research.

Philip Bes in his review of the Early to Mid-Roman ceramics (Chapter 12) contrasts these cumulative signs of urban contraction and impoverishment with the favourable explosion of imports in exactly these centuries, even while the vast majority of ceramics remained locally or at least regionally made. This surely, if counter-intuitively, highlights the polarization in Greek rural societies, between the displacement of lower or middle class farmer-citizens, with the reduction in their numbers and status, to the benefit of a globalized mercantile class of rich citizens and incoming Italians, in what some have characterized as a previously unparalleled, proto-capitalist economy (cf. Bintliff 2012a, Chapter 13).

Hellenistic Merged (and 'Hellenistic?' Merged) (Fig. 3.71)
This map combines the finds from the whole era, from Early through Middle into Late Hellenistic, that is from the late fourth century BC to around the end of the first. A dramatic change in the city's shape has been documented for Late Hellenistic, so that this

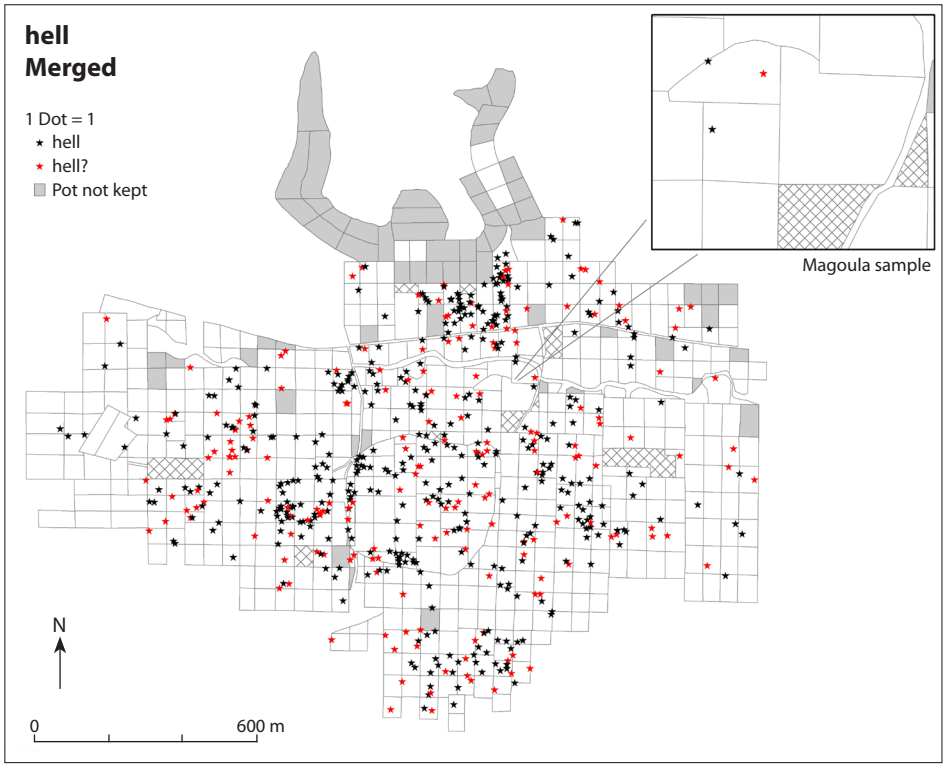


Figure 3.71. *Combined distribution of all sherds from the Hellenistic era (with 'Hellenistic?').*

map displays a combination of the wider Classical and earlier Hellenistic with the more contracted city of Late Hellenistic, somewhat blurring our analysis of the separate phases.

Early Iron Age/Classical/Early Hellenistic and Late Geometric/Classical (and the 'Possible' Finds) (Fig. 3.72)
This map presents several categories of finds, each with a very wide potential range, together covering the entire first millennium BC. It would be expected, therefore, to depict aspects of different occupational phases at the city site. The strongest cluster on the map is the location in the far eastern extremity which as we have seen was a focus, almost certainly for burial, from the Iron Age to the Archaic period, but not for the subsequent C–H phase. The far west by comparison is not strong, but the far south is moderately so, and also the north-eastern sector across the Kanavaris, an area regularly picked out from the Iron Age (and before) down into C–H times, is fairly dense. There is a hint of a heightened band of finds to the north-west and south-west of the *Kastro*. zones that this time are well-represented from the Archaic through to the earlier Hellenistic era and, in the case of the area immediately west of the *Kastro*, still significant into Late Hellenistic times.

Hellenistic/Roman, Hellenistic/Middle Roman and Hellenistic/Late Roman (and their 'possibles')
Figs. 3.73 and 3.74 show two major groups of sherds which, once again, are generically assignable to longer cross-period phases, with a third, more closely dated but fugitive group in 'Hellenistic/Middle Roman'. The most prolific of these phases, 'Hellenistic to Roman', covers the whole era from *c*. 300 BC to *c*. AD 300. This time, the western cemetery area and its surroundings can first be picked out, with a corridor leading eastwards towards the denser area seen earlier, to the west and south-west of the *Kastro*. From the *Kastro*, another dense area reaches north and across the Kanavaris as far as the modern road and beyond; and a further band to the south includes the southern cemetery area. But there is only a smaller extension reaching out to the north-east of the *Kastro*; the eastern extremity is almost empty and the middle zone, between the *Kastro* and this former eastern burial area, is also low in finds. Across the Kanavaris, the remaining areas north of the main road, to the west and east, have very few pieces.

It is likely that any oddities in the distribution, covering six centuries, of the main zones of the H–R finds on this map are explained by the hidden sub-periods that compose it, and which were seen in previous maps. Thus the westerly area, on this showing,

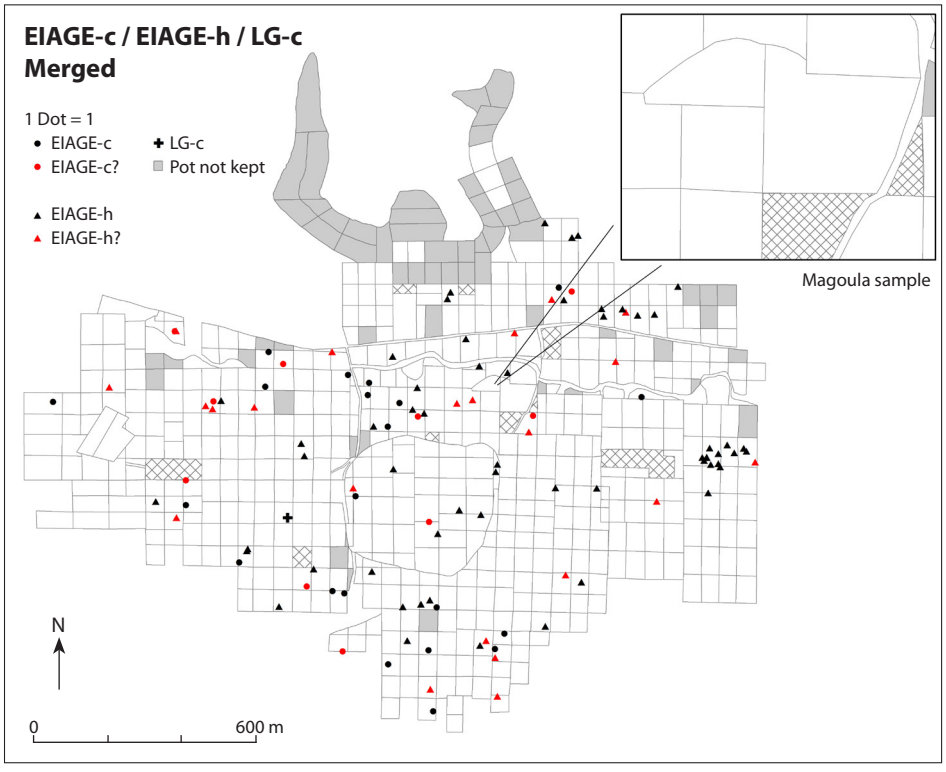


Figure 3.72. *Combined distribution of Early Iron Age / Classical, Early Iron Age / Hellenistic and Late Geometric / Classical sherds, together with 'possible' finds.*

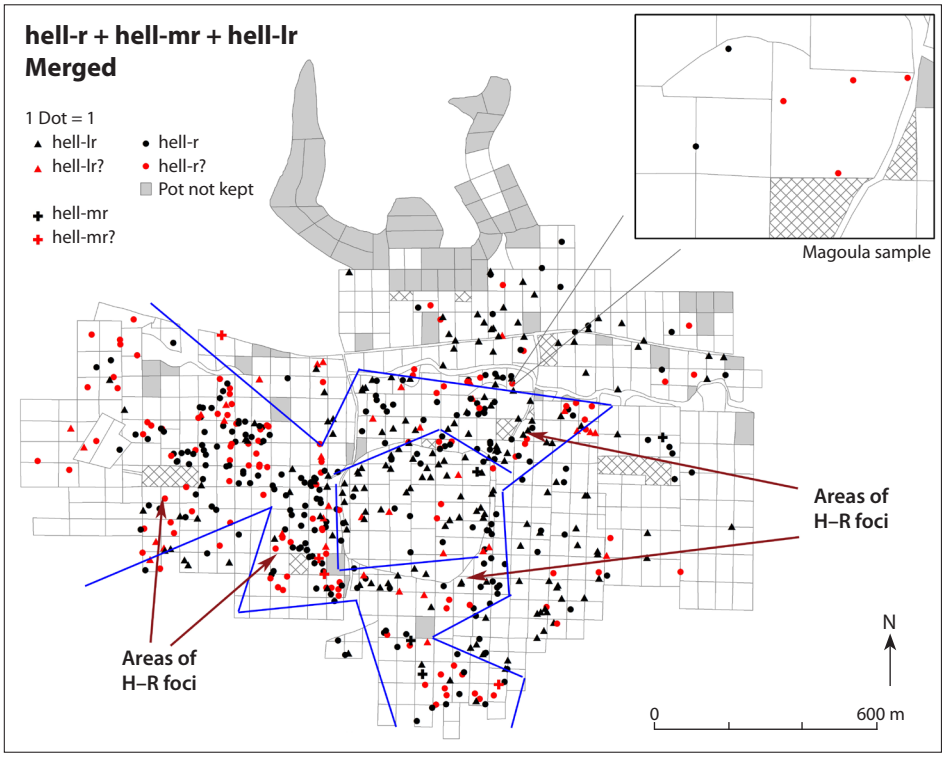


Figure 3.73. *Combined distribution of Hellenistic / Roman, Hellenistic / Middle Roman and Hellenistic / Late Roman sherds, with outlines defining the areas of denser scatters.*

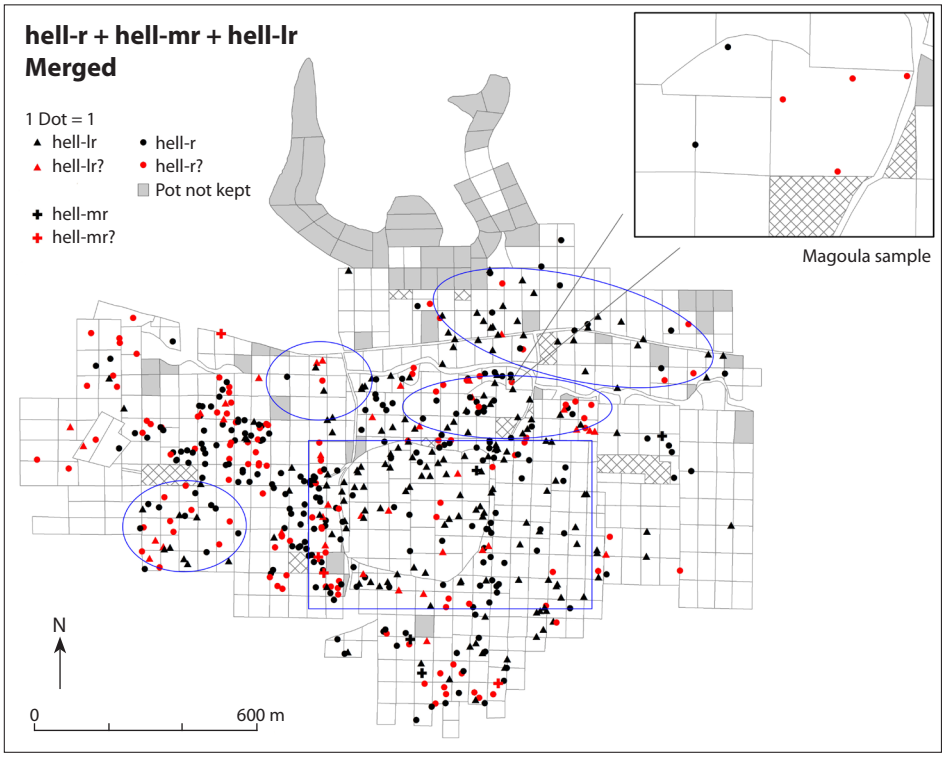


Figure 3.74. *Combined distribution of the same ceramic classes as in Fig. 3.73, with outlines defining the specifically Hellenistic / Late Roman concentrations.*

would be primarily Classical and earlier Hellenistic, and the southern area likewise. The area just outside the *Kastro* to the south-west is part of the Late Hellenistic core, but in its entirety also best paralleled in Classical and earlier Hellenistic times; the same goes for the area to the north, and especially the focus to the north-east, of the *Kastro*. The *Kastro* itself, as we have come to expect with earlier periods, has few finds. Fig. 3.73 outlines the main foci of this period.

Such broad generic groupings tend to be composed of small and poorly preserved pieces; but in this case it seems from the analysis that the material may predominantly be dated to the earlier two centuries of the Hellenistic era, *c*. 300–100 BC, when the city was still at or near its peak, with a maximal urban area and the traditional peripheral cemeteries, but in the centre and east suppressed by later activity.

Certainly the even broader chronology of the generic 'Hellenistic to Late Roman' pieces presents significant contrasts to the preceding distribution just discussed. Once again we have outlined its main foci, in Fig. 3.74, and these foci are generally distinct from the 'H–R' groupings, with the exception of an elongated east–west running band to the north-east of the *Kastro*. The closest parallel is with a map that we shall shortly introduce, that for Late Roman; so the distribution for this phase can then be used in support of the material to be discussed under Late Roman. The finds dated 'Hellenistic to Middle Roman' are too few to deserve analysis.

In conclusion, it appears that the two generic groups that we have discussed, far from representing a balanced mixture of poorly diagnostic finds from periods of 600 and 900 years respectively, are in reality largely dominated by much shorter time-periods, the Early to Middle Hellenistic for the 'H–R' class and Late Roman for the 'H–LR' class. Although it has been suggested by our ceramic specialists (Chapters 11, 12), from purely internal analysis of the finds, that a significant proportion of the Hellenistic to Mid-Roman deposits lies hidden in cross-period assemblages, our spatial analysis, if correct, underlines two wider trends that can be identified: the drastic contraction of the city from Late Hellenistic times onwards, and the dense overlay of well-made pottery across the domestic and burial zones during the final Late Roman centuries of the town.

The Roman and later periods

Early Roman, Early–Middle Roman and Middle Roman (and their 'possibles?') (Fig. 3.75)

With these categories, we revert to more closely identified, but functionally partial assemblages. The finds assigned to the first to fourth centuries AD are mostly drawn from select, well-dated fine wares, with 'ER' covering the first two centuries AD and 'MR' the third and fourth. This leaves the period from c. AD 400 to the mid-seventh century for the final phase, Late Roman.

The less than full functional range of all three of these groups makes it likely that only certain contexts will be picked out, giving a skeletal version of the functional scheme that has been sketched for earlier Roman. The Early Roman sherds cluster in the *Kastro* and in a broad band which runs to its east, but dies away before reaching the former far eastern burial zone. To the north of this, a second east–west-running band of denser finds fills the space between *Kastro* and river, with only a small, central group of sherds extending north of the latter. This spread has a number, but not all, of the features of the 'Roman' map (Fig. 3.68) which covers a rather shorter period lasting to *c*. AD 300, yet it clearly qualifies to be treated as additional material for that phase. The Middle Roman, however, when compared with the Early Roman of the preceding two centuries, adds clusters in the far west and far south, but loses the focus north of the Kanavaris and the modern road. Here we note too the great mortared pebble platform towards the east of the city (Chapter 4, p. 159, Site 50) which is very similar to one found in the 2013 rescue trench beside the main road: both are likely to be bases for Roman monumental tombs. As noted earlier (p. 106), a possible monumental tomb of Roman date lies not far west of the *Kastro*.

Certain features of this map seem to anticipate the Late Roman phase, suggesting for example that some of the peripheral areas recover in popularity already in Middle Roman. Yet the virtual absence of Middle Roman north of the Kanavaris remains mysterious, since both Early and Late Roman have a significant presence there. The infrastructure for this whole period proposed in Fig. 3.74, we suggest, will be found to have many features similar to those for the earlier Roman, Fig. 3.75.

Reasonable though it might seem to conclude that, as in the earlier, Hellenistic use of the then recently fortified area north of the Kanavaris, domestic and public use must have continued, the recent rescue finds from beside the modern east–west road make it clear that, between Middle Hellenistic and Late Roman times, burials have again invaded this sector; while the strong domestic element previously detected seems not to extend beyond the earlier part of Late Hellenistic, not even into Early Roman. We would conclude that the sometime domestic zone of the city extension across the river came later to form a major area for burial, from Roman, perhaps even from

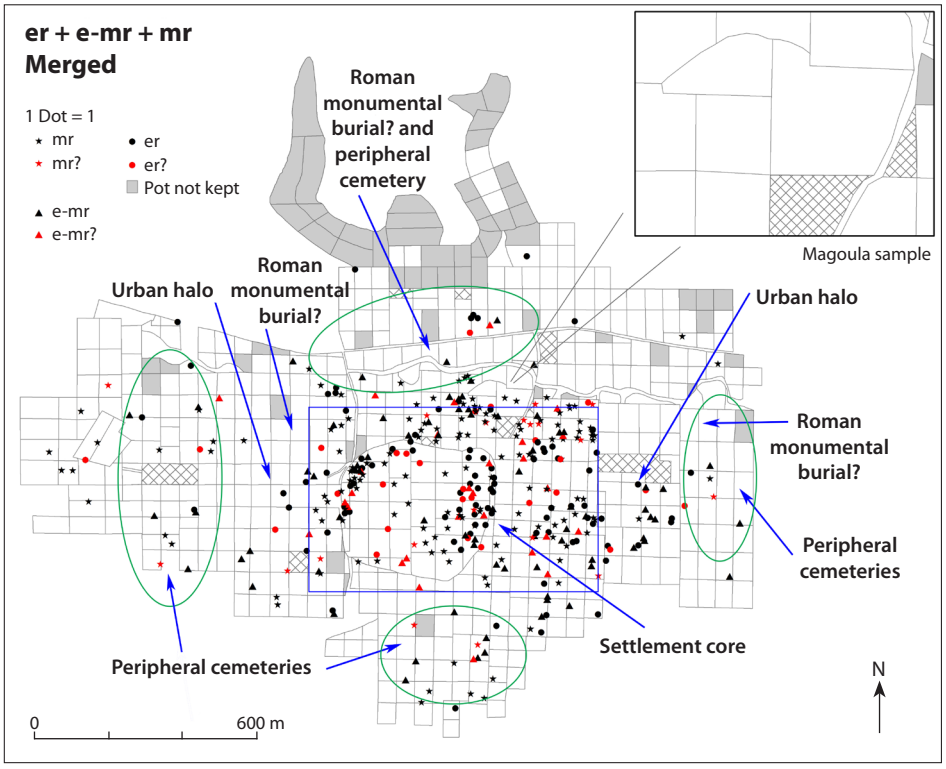


Figure 3.75. *Combined distribution of Early Roman, Early / Middle Roman and Middle Roman sherds, together with 'possible' finds*

Early Roman times onwards, until the end of antiquity, despite the continuing use of the theatre and the possible location of a gymnasium in this sector.

How large was the Early to Middle Roman town? If we subtract the cemetery areas and the likely urban halo, we are left with a rectangle running from the western edge of the *Kastro* eastwards, and covering some 34 ha (Fig. 3.75 again). Yet the striking shrinkage of the city, shown by survey data, seems belied by its relatively positive image in the ancient historical and epigraphic sources. Besides Strabo's comment (above, p. 105), contrasting Thespiai and Tanagra with the decrepit if not ruinous state of the other cities, the plethora of dedications, especially those linked to Rome, often make mention of newly built structures in connection with these cults (Müller, Chapter 7). Since the dissolution of the Boeotian Confederacy in 171 by Rome, the cities increasingly belonged to their wealthy élites, together with the incoming Italian businessmen and important individuals in the Imperial administration with whom they often fraternized. There was certainly wealth in the city, but as in the rest of the early Empire, it was concentrated in the hands of the few, even if they were encouraged to disburse some of it, through euergetism, on public amenities and urban architecture.

Against this background in Boeotian life (see Müller 2002; 2010), the Thespian territory and, from our preliminary results, probably other city landscapes too show a curious emptiness between the disappearance of the many farms and hamlets of the Classical–Early Hellenistic era, and the appearance and gradual expansion, in size and in number, of villas and villa-hamlets from Middle Roman through to Late Roman times (*c.* AD 200–600) (*Testing the Hinterland*: 155–60). This new form of estate is usually seen as the physical manifestation of the concentration of landholding in Greece in the hands of the wealthier class. It remains for us in future volumes to shed light on these curious processes in the wider countryside, but let us for the present assume that the work-force, for a much reduced area of land in use, dwelt in the shrunken towns and surviving villages of the *chora* (which may have for some time excluded Askra), alongside the residences of a burgeoning élite class of indigenous and foreign origin. The important evidence for *negotiatores* ('money-men', cf. Paterson 1998) in Thespiai and Tanagra in this period would seem to rest primarily on commercialization of agricultural wealth, since no other obvious resources were available. It is tantalizing to guess at what a friend of Cicero's was up to when he was 'doing some

business in Thespiai' (Chapter 7, p. 234); while the likelihood that agents of wealthy foreigners (freedmen and slaves) were resident, but acting for absent patrons, also adds to a sharply contrasted picture of the Thespian economy under Rome. The numbers of Italians in the city were enough to support their separate new gymnasium, cleverly paid for (along with the necessary oil) by a local magnate desirous of close association with the new political and economic elite of the Empire, at his own expense (Müller 2002). But the absence of significant rural settlement till the Middle Roman era, and the fall-off in the associated off-site scatters, suggests a severe reduction in the labour force and the area of land in use, by comparison with the preceding eras.

Late Roman (and 'Late Roman'?) (Fig. 3.76)

Here we have one of the most satisfactory of all our ceramic assemblages, full in its range, relatively easy to date and clear in its distribution. The heart of deposition lies squarely within the *Kastro*, with the next highest densities outside to the north-east and east, and a slighter overspill round the western and south-eastern fringes. The tight clustering shown neatly reflects our deduction, from epigraphic evidence, that the fort itself was constructed within this phase (Chapter 2, pp. 16–17). As spelled out there, the evidence for a more exact dating gives us a *terminus post quem* of the late fourth century AD (see also below, p. 188).

Such an imperial initiative would also best explain the form that the fortification evidently took; for although since Jamot's demolition of the late nineteenth century the rampart has appeared as a sub-oval irregular linear heap of earth, rubble and spolia (Figs. 3.8–3.12), earlier travellers had described a more elaborate structure (Chapter 2, pp. 8–13). Gell and Ulrichs in particular portray a regular hexagon, with large cut stone basal layers, to which a mud-brick superstructure was probably added. In confirmation of this, we observed in 2001 (see Chapter 4, p. 145, Site 4.I) a regular stone tower foundation projecting out of the *Kastro*, later excavated by Dr. Aravantinos, which likewise points to a regular planned fortification wall with interval towers.

In the far south, the assumed cemetery area is active, but somewhat obscured by an equally dense east–west-running scatter between it and the *Kastro* to its north. The far eastern sector recovers to a healthier spread, at similar levels to the supposed south cemetery; but here again, a scatter at least as dense occupies the intervening ground to its west towards

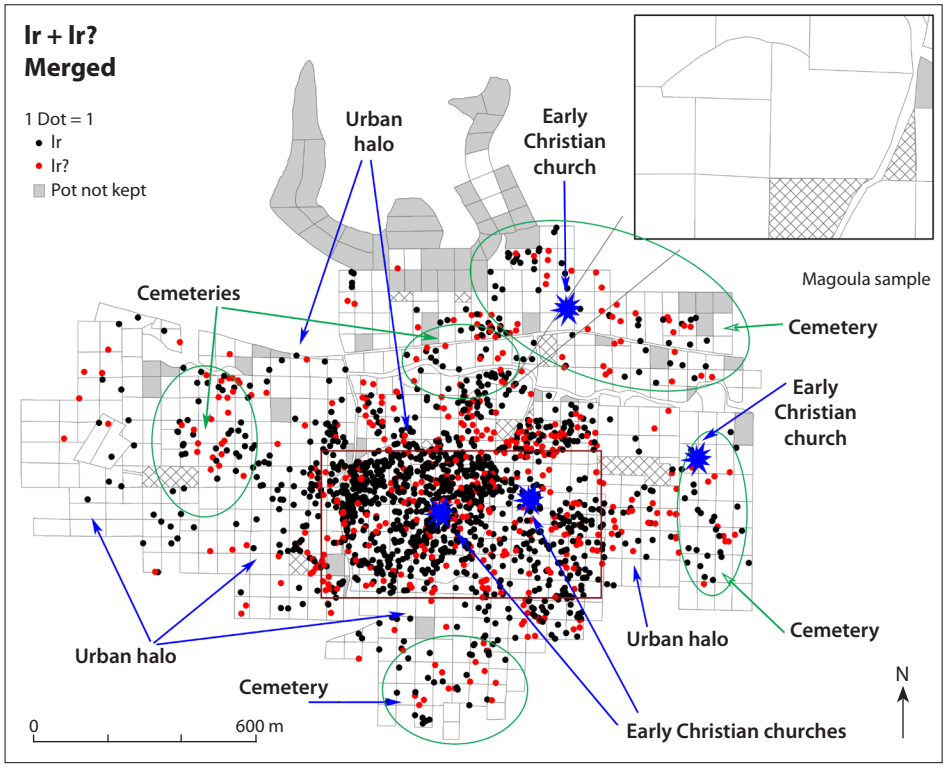


Figure 3.76. *Distribution of Late Roman (and 'Late Roman?') sherds.*

the *Kastro*. In the trans-Kanavaris sector, there is little to the west, but the much denser central spread and a new and separate far eastern focus, together with an intervening cluster in the valley running uphill northwards, can all alike be viewed now as burials. South of the Kanavaris, in the west the story is similar: a dense cluster reappears, showing much activity in the traditional cemetery here, but there are also fairly dense groups separating this from the edge of the *Kastro*, along with thinner scatters to its west, north-west and south.

The 'Merged' map thus provides our best synoptic view of the Late Antique town. It is advantageous to compare it with that for earlier Roman Fig. 3.75, since each in a different way gives the impression of a relatively thriving city. The Late Roman clearly does not match the spatial extent and consistency of the Classical/Hellenistic material, but its massive densities in and to the east of the *Kastro* are still impressive indeed.

Both maps agree that the built-up area is focused on the *Kastro* with an extensive suburb to its east. But only in Late Roman times are all the traditional cemeteries in significant use, in contrast to Early Roman when the north-eastern and far eastern cemeteries had very little activity. This might at first sight be seen to imply some recovery in population as between the two eras.

The probable existence hereabouts of at least two Early Christian churches, one somewhere in the eastern half of the *Kastro*, the other in the eastern suburb just 100 m outside the *Kastro* wall (Chapter 4, p. 145, Site 4A.I and p. 156, Site 36) is hardly a surprise; but the Middle Byzantine churches found in the north-eastern (Agios Athanasios, Chapter 4, p. 188) and far eastern ('Makri Ekklesia', *ibid*., pp. 160–1, Site 51) cemeteries appear to have had probable Early Christian predecessors. The church in the *Kastro* must have found a successor or replacement of Early Byzantine date, in the structure whose lintel block survives at Site 8 (*ibid*., p. 149); while the two outlying churches were to continue to be renovated or replaced, into Middle Byzantine or even Modern times.

Apart from the shrunken but dense core zone and the peripheral cemeteries, we have observed wide swathes of moderately dense sherds and smaller areas with lighter scatters for this era. To comprehend these zones, and with them the delineation of the core and the burial areas, there are two major factors to consider. The first is one that we have had to deal with since the Late Hellenistic Fig. 3.66, and that is our secure knowledge of the change, from this phase onwards until the end of antiquity, in the disposal of urban waste. We have to conclude that, in place of the massive operation of taking a major part of it out into the surrounding countryside for manuring purposes, much of it must have remained within the area covered by our city grid. With the shrinkage of the town, it is more than likely that some house-plots were abandoned: so, too, in this period when Christianity became first tolerated and then imposed, the abandonment and spoliation of many pagan shrines will have followed. The presence of a church in or near the Forum is a symptom of these changes. As with the preceding Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, our working hypothesis is that the urban rubbish, if not placed into abandoned plots within the surviving built-up city core, was deposited in the zone between this core and the cemeteries, and probably also around and between the discrete cemetery plots. It is not at all implausible that some of this dumping was purposely directed on to suburban market gardens, as the reconstruction by Ducellier (*Testing the Hinterland*: 24, Fig. 4.3) of intensive Byzantine village 'infield cultivation' would suggest.

Such considerations would certainly condense the wide spread of Late Roman material into a far smaller occupied area than appeared at first sight; but a second equally important factor needs now to be introduced. David Pettegrew has persuasively argued (Pettegrew 2007) that the high diagnostic quality of Late Roman ceramics enhances their visibility, in comparison with Hellenistic and Early to Middle Roman finds. Thus, a similar level of activity to that of earlier Roman Thespiai will appear far higher in Late Antiquity, especially in the greater density of finds. Finally, we can add to this the fact that the Late Roman settlement is the last urban occupation, deposited above the older historical levels; and, over most of the grid, it suffers no major subsequent disturbance, thus further favouring its exposure on the surface.

These elements could be read as signifying a Late Roman town that was stronger and had revived to the point of re-colonizing areas of the grid, compared with the distribution shown in the 'Roman' map. Even when we allow for a raising of all the density levels, caused by the enhanced diagnosticity, we must still admit that the eastern and north-eastern cemetery zones have resumed significant activity, after almost none in the earlier period, and that the area of the western cemetery in use has expanded considerably. Yet when we try to separate out, as far as possible, the domestic areas, there is actually some further contraction of the urban core, which covers perhaps some 30 ha rather than the 34 of earlier Roman Imperial centuries. This might equate

to an urban population of around 3750. But on the positive side, there is the expansion of villa and villa-hamlet settlement in the city's immediate hinterland, although we have argued (see *Testing the Hinterland*: 160–6) that the villas at least seem to have housed a very small resident work-force.

Here the architectural finds can join with the ceramics to convey a more three-dimensional picture of the contemporary town. As noted above (p. 117) and indicated on the Late Roman map, the *Kastro* enceinte may have enclosed a church of Early Christian age, while further to the east stand three other Christian monuments. One is the prominent stump of rubble, tile and mortar, Site 36 in Chapter 4, certainly from a church of apsidal plan, as determined by a brief and unpublished trial with geophysics. Its exact date, and that of the earlier of the two cruciform apsidal churches further east again, at Site 51 (the *Makri Ekklesia*), remains unclear. The latter (see again Chapter 4, pp. 160–1) lies in an ambiguous location, immediately to the east of an L-shaped space marked as 'not surveyed' on our maps (a dense maize plantation at the time) and just before the last block of transects at the eastern extremity – thus on the very periphery of our Late Roman distribution, and well outside the zone of dense finds (though as we shall see presently, it lies close to the heart of the more southerly of the two Byzantine and Frankish villages). Clearance of recent field-stone dumping, on the part of local villagers, by Božidar Slapšak and his Slovenian team has shown that a large three-aisled church, very probably of Early Christian date, was replaced by a smaller, Middle Byzantine cross-in-square successor on the same site. Across the Kanavaris, and equally closely associated with the more northerly Medieval village stands a second, this time still surviving church, that of Agios Athanasios (Chapter 4, p. 188). It appears, from earlier investigations, that this too overlies older foundations: again, these were possibly of an Early Christian predecessor, although it was not excluded that the first, and grander, church was also of cross-in-square form and so Middle Byzantine.

In general, more Early Christian churches in Greece are erected in the fifth than in the fourth century AD, especially in major public contexts. As paganism was gradually suppressed and its sanctuaries abandoned, destroyed or converted to Christian use, their architecture was frequently recycled as spolia into public and private use (Bintliff 2012, Chs. 15–16), as was conspicuously the case with the Agios Athanasios church. We might expect, then, that the end of pagan worship in the Forum area, with the closing of its pagan temples and the construction of one or more major churches within the recently constructed *Kastro* circuit, would belong to the fifth or sixth century rather than the fourth. The creation of basilican churches on the peripheries of urban centres is also typical for Early Christian practice: they can mark the tombs of local martyrs, who were commonly executed outside the walls of towns, or merely sacralize an existing Late Antique cemetery. We have no records of Thespian martyrdoms, but it is most likely that this marginal church, the *Makri Ekklesia* in local parlance, and the possibly contemporary second church to its north across the river, were features of the Late Roman burial zone.

An intriguing detail is the apparent absence, even at the time of the painstaking traveller H. Ulrichs in 1837 (see Chapter 2, p. 13), of any known dedication for the Middle Byzantine successor church at the *Makri Ekklesia*, in contrast to that of its northerly partner which survives to this day. This is curious, since the abandonment of a Medieval village and its removal to a successor settlement not far away normally permitted the name of the village church's patron saint to be preserved. Settlement on the site of ancient Thespiai is known to have survived into the opening years of the nineteenth century: it would be strange if, little over 30 years later in that century, no memory of the dedication survived this desertion, particularly when the women of the modern hill-top village of Thespies were still visiting the location, to wash clothes at the immediately adjacent built spring-house, into the early twentieth century (Fig. 2.2).

An explanation may now have been given by Božidar Slapšak's clearance work at *Makri Ekklesia*. For an abrupt interruption took place in the development of this church from Early Christian to Middle Byzantine times, through the impact of the Frankish monastic presence. A massive tower, whether built for controlling or for storage purposes (probably both, if we take parallels from other Boeotian Frankish towers (Lock 1986)), was built beside the smaller Middle Byzantine chapel, which may either have gone out of use, or been appropriated for Catholic worship (this latter having been the fate of a church with a rather similar sequence at the medieval village of Agios Thomas near ancient Tanagra (Vionis 2008). Whereas the Agios Thomas church was eventually reconstructed as a Greek Orthodox chapel, if of a now curious tower-like form, after the end of Frankish rule, the *Makri Ekklesia* monuments have remained dominated by the foundations of the monastic tower down to the present day, with no restoration of the church. It seems then likely that it was the Agios Athanasios church which retained the use and memory of the twin medieval villages of Erimokastro

until their final desertion in the early nineteenth century, allowing the other ruin merely to retain the anonymous ecclesiastical tag *Makri Ekklesia*, which for so long distorted our understanding of the site, until the recent clearance operation (see again Chapter 4, pp. 160–1). In the apparent failure to recommission the church after the disappearance of the Catholic monks – perhaps on the grounds of religious contamination? – another factor may well have played a part. The Athanasios church had evidently served as the burial church for both the Middle Byzantine hamlets on the plain, with burials placed into the abandoned aisles of its larger Early Christian predecessor. If the *Makri Ekklesia*, now rejected, had hitherto served as the parish church, the Agios Athanasios church was still there to take its place as a centre of worship for the Greek villagers.

Elsewhere, agricultural activity was found, in April 2009, to have exposed what seems to be a slab-covered chamber tomb of Roman Imperial or later date, just inside the southern wall of the *Kastro*. This tomb may either antedate the building of the wall (Chapter 4, pp. 147–8), or else could possibly be associated with the evidence for a Late Roman church; it is known from other cases that burials were now allowed in church precincts, violating the earlier regulation that required extramural burial in Greco-Roman towns (compare contemporary Argos, with its excavated intramural graveyards: Oikonomou-Laniado 2003). Very rarely, members of the local élite were buried in prominent locations at the core of a city, even in Early Imperial times, as in the *agora* of Argos, cf. Pierart and Touchais 1996); thus, we cannot rule out that the tomb belonged to some unknown notable of exceptional local prestige. This remains, however, the less likely of the two chronological attributions, especially when we consider the location of the central church of Late Roman Thespiai not far off (see p. 117).

Two other elements deserve treatment. First comes the observation that the architectural survey found little or nothing beyond the western fringes of the *Kastro*, apart from pieces of the monumental building of supposed Roman funerary use (see p. 106). In contrast, the area within and to the east and north-east of the *Kastro* offers much in the way of detached blocks, many believed to be of Roman or Late Roman origin, as well as *in situ* remains. Given that the Medieval and Ottoman villages were located far away to the east and, even in the case of the more southerly of the two villages, overlapped only slightly with the Roman suburbs, it was always less likely that Late Roman structures in these western sectors would be systematically robbed away. This would tend to support the notion that the scatters of medium density in the intervening sectors of our grid may be suburban, rather than part of the main occupied area, with a mixture of non-urban uses including cemetery, garden culture, and dumping of rubbish. These we have identified as 'urban halo' on Fig. 3.76.

A second element to reintroduce is that of industrial production. The distribution of ceramic 'wasters' – rejected pieces from the firing process – and iron slag from the surface survey is very informative (Fig. 3.77). From the start, the great majority of the wasters were recognized by John Hayes as being 'Late Roman' in date, a judgment confirmed by the re-study of these finds, with the residue being classified as 'Roman/Late Roman'. There is a notable clustering of finds, neatly enclosed within the boundaries of the *Kastro*, with most of the other finds – as can be seen by comparison with our hypothetical functional map of the Late Roman town (Fig. 3.76) – lying in what we have defined as an 'urban halo' of waste disposal zones mixed with suburban craftwork, gardens etc. Just a few are located in the trans-Kanavaris north-eastern zone, in what we have indicated as a burial sector; but this is an extensive space, and urban rubbish or construction debris could well have lain between discrete cemetery enclosures.

Having housed successively the Archaic and later *agora* and the Early Roman Forum, the *Kastro* area would hitherto have contained, at the most, only a sharply restricted level of industrial activity, especially if this was linked to ceramic or metallurgical kilns. Yet it is hardly possible that this concentrated activity was post-Roman in date, when the *Kastro* had been finally abandoned and the twin Middle to Late Byzantine villages of 'Erimokastro' were growing up far to the east: significant ceramic representation of these phases is absent from the *Kastro*.

In fact, a characteristic feature of Late Antiquity is the installation of pottery and metal workshop production within the core of Roman towns especially in the sixth–seventh centuries (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001: 89 (Clunia in Spain); 297–298 (Gerasa in Jordan)). It is also a feature of the small defended enclosures, with a reduced urban function, of the type of our *Kastro*, as argued for the Isthmia Fortress by Gregory (1993a) and Kardulias (2005). The Late Roman focus of such production suggests a quite new concept of urban space, in strong contrast to the traditional public and sacred functions that we associate with the Greek and Roman city. Vionis (Chapter 8) underlines the important link between the central role of the Church in the Late Antique town and its economic life, industry included.

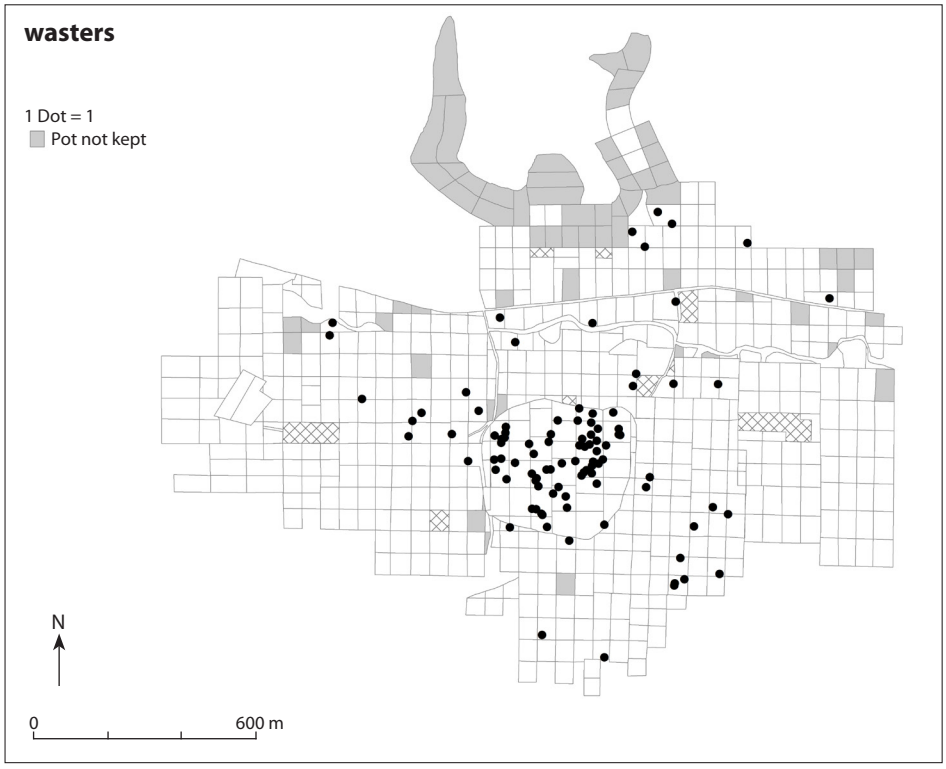


Figure 3.77. *'Wasters' and other industrial debris.*

To conclude, even when we allow for the 'ceramic enhancement' factor, and despite lingering uncertainty as to the kinds of activity that generated the lighter Late Roman scatters in the intermediate sectors between the *Kastro* and the peripheral cemeteries, it seems justifiable to envisage the Late Roman urban community of Thespiai as one which, for all its spatial diminution, continued to retain its vitality.

Middle–Late Roman (and 'Middle–Late Roman?') (Fig. 3.78)

Here we have another cross-phase category, composed of material that could belong in either period. A bias towards the later of the two eras might have been expected, in line with our previous discussion. The numbers of finds are just good enough for trends to be detected but in fact, when we compare the details, this grouping shows closer similarities to that of the earlier (Fig. 3.75), rather than to the Late Roman. This is shown by the sparse evidence from the western, southern, northern, north-eastern and eastern cemeteries, although the revival of the far eastern cemetery to a modest level of use is a Late Roman trend. The shape of the city core, and of the intermediate zones between here and the cemeteries, also tends if anything to mimic the earlier Roman. This is therefore valuable evidence to support the (here) rather thinly represented Middle Roman. It should be recalled, too, that the Early and Middle Roman periods are taken to overlap in time (AD 1 to 300 and AD 200 to 400 respectively); so if the combined data would suggest that Middle Roman phase is most strongly represented on this map, the Early Roman is not necessarily thereby excluded. We can suggest that the additional changes we see in Late Roman, most notably a revival in the evidence from the peripheral cemetery zones, are genuinely traceable from *c*. AD 400 onwards.

Roman/Late Roman (and 'Roman/Late Roman?') (Fig. 3.79)

This is another cross-period assemblage, including finds that are genuinely marginal between earlier and later Roman, yet cannot be assigned to the more closely dated but primarily fine-ware class of 'Middle Roman', as well as finds which are not assignable more closely than to the entire Roman era. One would expect such a map to combine features of the separate 'Roman' and 'Late Roman' maps, and we have just discussed what these two discrete phases have in common or in contrast, making it now feasible to assess their relative contribution to the cross-period maps. If we were correct in arguing that Late Roman is likely

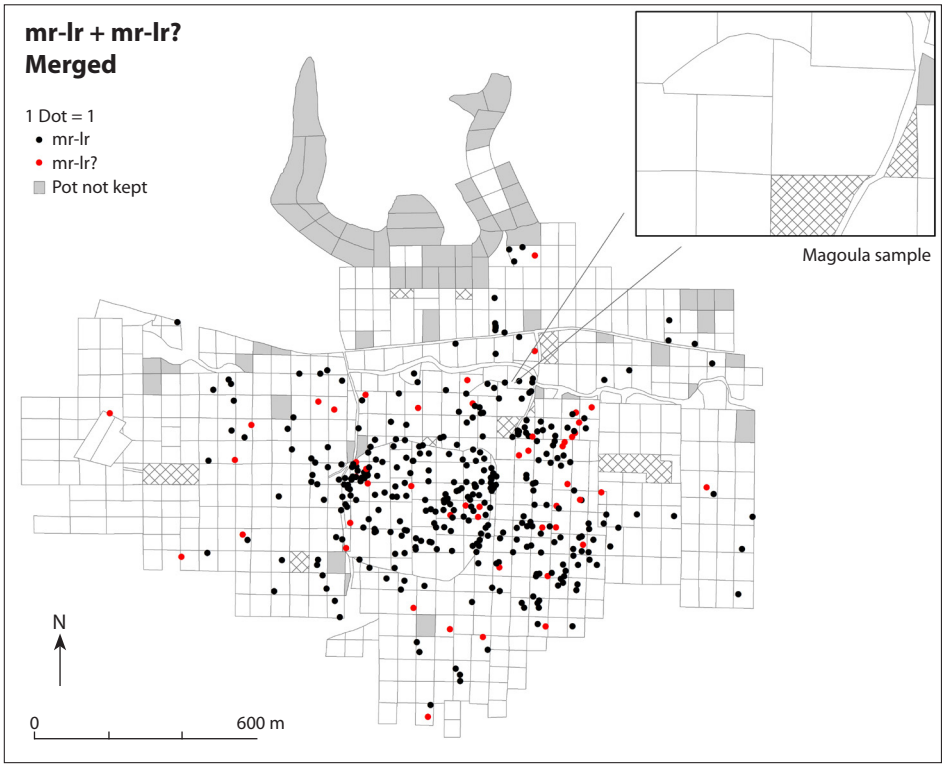


Figure 3.78. *Distribution of Middle / Late Roman (and 'Middle / Late Roman?') sherds.*

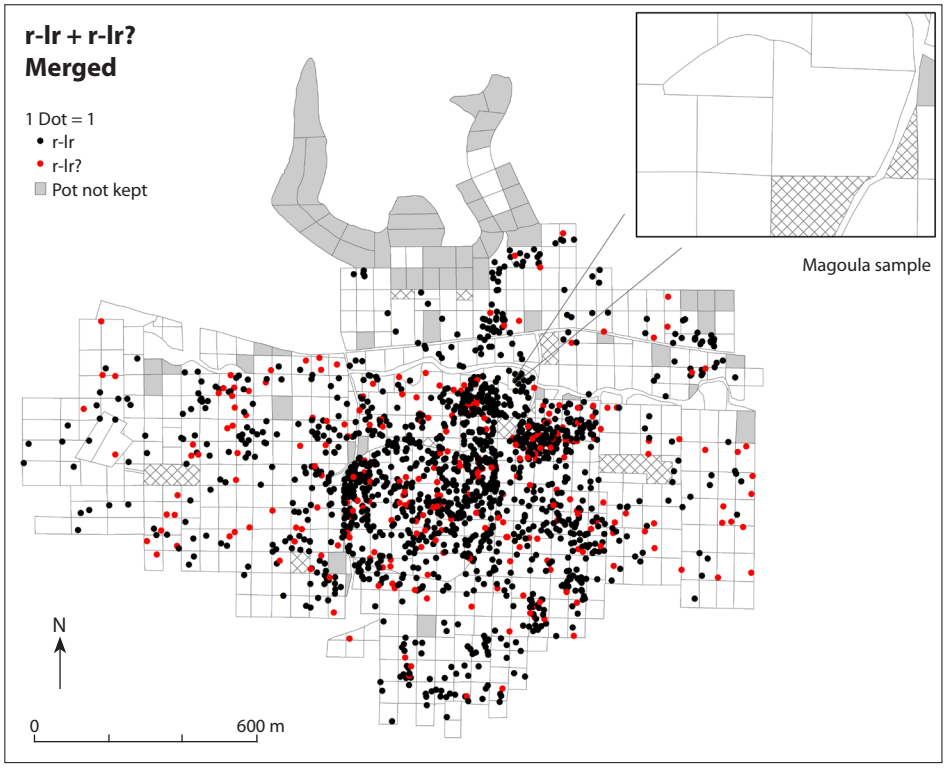


Figure 3.79. *Distribution of Roman / Late Roman (and 'Roman / Late Roman?') sherds.*

to be better represented in the finds through greater diagnosticity, we might predict that the generic Late Roman finds would be the dominant element. In this case, the overall number of finds is decidedly high and the 'Merged' map is clearly far closer to its Late Roman than to its earlier counterparts, once we focus on spatial spread rather than simple density. If, on this basis, much of this material can be added to the more closely dated Late Roman, then the picture of a dense spread of finds for Late Roman Thespiai is further reinforced. The clear increase in rural activity in the southern *chora* between Early (minimal), through Middle (increasing) to Late (maximal) Roman times (*Testing the Hinterland*: 151–66) certainly runs in parallel to developments in ceramic deposition in the city between the first and last phases, but the scarcity of clear Middle Roman attributions obscures what may well have been a parallel sequence throughout. The slight rise in rural populations may well, in fact, act to counter-balance the apparent small decline in the size of the urban domestic core.

Late Roman (–Early Byzantine?) and Early Byzantine? (Fig. 3.80)

This is an intriguing and fugitive category of finds, representing the period from the mid- to late seventh century to the early ninth century AD. In *Testing the Hinterland*, p. 179, we had differed from the published view of our current specialist in Medieval ceramics, Joanita Vroom (cf. Vroom 2003), in suspecting that the development of a later settlement of Byzantine times, on the eastern extramural fringes of the Late Roman city, pointed to some continuity of occupation on the site of Thespiai. Re-examination of the Medieval finds, with some added evidence for Early Byzantine types, by Nassos Vionis in 2007–2008 has allowed us to revise our maps for this period; while consultation of the original pottery records of John Hayes reveals that he too had assigned to this period, tentatively or firmly, a few of the 'Dark Age' sherds now recognized by Vionis.

The numbers involved are very small indeed: there are nine possible pieces assigned to Early Byzantine, and four in an overlapping group termed 'Late Roman – Early Byzantine'. These latter, transitional-style sherds occur in the western cemetery area and on the fringes of the *Kastro*, zones well populated with finds of Late Roman age. Those of the possible 'Early Byzantine' date differ, lying in the north-eastern and eastern cemetery areas, or in the sectors just north and east of the *Kastro* which we have classified as likely to be 'urban halo' rather than city core in Late Roman times. At the same time, the pieces in the east and north-east lie in the orbit of the later double villages of Middle Byzantine times; yet it seems more likely that these widely scattered possible Early Byzantine pieces reflect a low-density activity, in the core zones of Late Roman settlement and burial as well as in areas which are going to be the heart of the next, much clearer Middle Byzantine phase. The possibility that this Dark Age material of the seventh to ninth centuries shows some settlement activity continuing in the Roman town, alongside activity also beginning on the future Medieval village sites, would naturally be an interesting one.

In the spring of 2009, these considerations were sharpened by the closer study of two architectural pieces from within the *Kastro*, one now in the museum courtyard at Thespies, the other still in the field. A specialist from the Byzantine Ephoreia for our region and a contributor to our Project, Michael Karambinis, was able to give a dating for these carved pieces of church architecture. One piece (item # 4A. I, p. 145 in Chapter 4 below) belongs to the period of the still flourishing Late Roman settlement of the fifth–sixth centuries AD; this fits the expectation that a major urban church would have existed within the *Kastro*, to be associated with the Bishopric for the 'Thespienses', recorded in our sources (Koder and Hild 1976: 275). The other piece, however (at Site (8) in Chapter 4), has a remarkable chronology: it should belong to the Early Byzantine Dark Ages, around the eighth to earliest ninth century – thus pre-dating the prominent new ecclesiastical foundations at Skripou and Thebes, of the mid- to late ninth century, and probably forming part of a structure built during the Byzantine struggle to end the Slav occupation of the Boeotian countryside (Megaw 1966: 20–3). The implication is of a genuinely transitional settlement pattern, as hypothesized above, in which some occupation of the former Late Roman town, including the *Kastro*, was maintained, while activity of some kind was also initiated at two other places, one in the trans-Kanavaris zone to the north-east of the former city, the other on its eastern fringes, later to form the cores of two separate villages. We had hitherto seen these finds of Early Byzantine as marking the beginnings of the new settlements; but the possibility cannot be ruled out that they merely indicate a continuing use of the burial zones, while other activities went on inside the Late Roman enclosure. It thus remains unclear at what point the *Kastro* was decisively abandoned, for settlement around the churches in what had been the peripheral eastern Late Antique cemetery zones; but, given the scanty evidence for this phase, we can make no suggestion as to the scale of population, except that it was clearly non-urban in nature and of dispersed village or hamlet character, probably amounting to

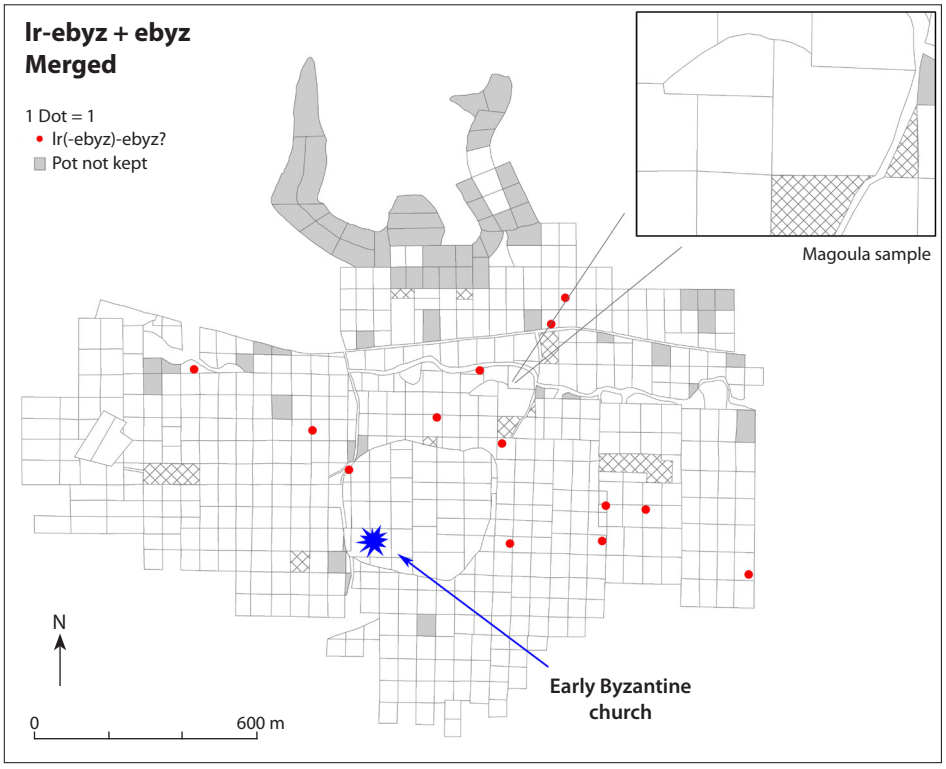


Figure 3.80. *Distribution of 'Late Roman / Early Byzantine' and 'Early Byzantine?' sherds.*

less than 200 inhabitants. To support a claim that such low numbers could reflect settlement locations, it has to be emphasized that research into Early Byzantine ceramics is at an early stage: much of the production of this era awaits recognition on the regional level. We hypothesize that, if the full range of contemporary wares were known for Central Greece, our thin scatter would reveal a denser reality.

Middle Byzantine (and 'Middle Byzantine?') (Fig. 3.81)
The ceramics that represent this era at Thespiai are dated from the tenth or eleventh century on into the twelfth century AD. Now for the first time the twin Medieval villages come abruptly into clear focus, in essentially the shape that they will retain down to the Late Turkish era.

The two centres are distinct, separated by clear space as well as by the river. The more northerly one clusters round the Medieval to post-Medieval Agios Athanasios church, in the trans-Kanavaris sector, and is quite closely focused. Both this locality and that of the other centre lie in areas that had, since prehistory, lain on the very eastern fringe of the settlement, and had often served as a distinct burial zone; we have suggested that they filled this revived role in Late Roman times.

The more southerly Middle Byzantine settlement is the more extensive of the two. The recent clearance of the older *Makri Ekklesia* church by the Slovenian team has shed light on its relationship with that monument, since in Middle Byzantine times this was remodelled into a smaller church, now lying on the eastern periphery of the contemporary hamlet, which it perhaps served as a community chapel. A parallel development may have occurred with the Agios Athanasios church, which lay in the very heart of the northerly hamlet, with a possible Early Christian precursor, which in turn would seem once to have had a Late Antique funerary setting and, to judge from the surrounding burials, its successor too, the smaller Middle Byzantine church, may have formed the main burial zone for the two hamlets.

Christian graves of Byzantine times often match, in their poverty, those of the preceding Late Roman era; and separating the Medieval cemetery zones from the domestic is correspondingly difficult, except by the crude inference that denser finds will indicate settlement. With regard to their location, urban excavations throughout the Mediterranean lands have demonstrated, at least from the sixth century AD on, a rupture with the Greco-Roman norms of extramural burial. Graves now cluster around churches, in both

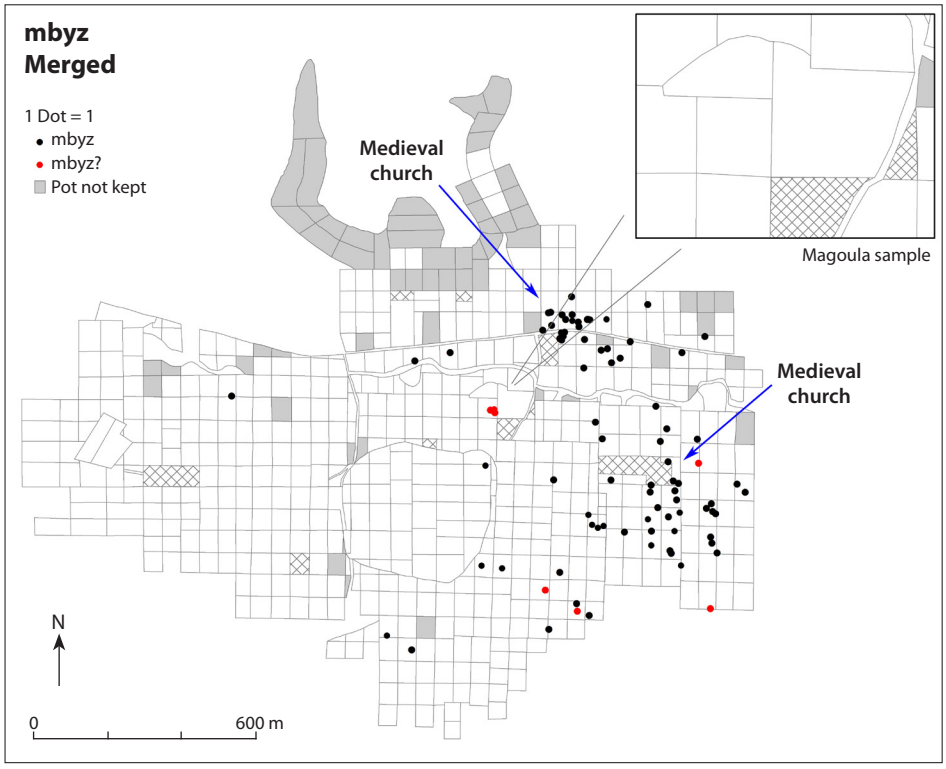


Figure 3.81. *Distribution of Middle Byzantine (and 'Middle Byzantine?') sherds.*

intra- and extra-mural settings (see p. 119). Since the two Medieval and Ottoman villages are, as we shall see, long-lived and extensive, their burials should be numerous. The Late Roman city had of course been a much larger community, but it seems to have used several spatially separated zones for its cemeteries. Our expectations for Medieval times are met with the excavation of Agios Athanasios, revealing an extensive cemetery around the later chapel, whereas *Makri Ekklesia* has so far lacked associated burial evidence.

The thin trails of finds, running away from the two village cores, are thus difficult to envisage as scattered burials: Byzantine and later practice leads us to expect nucleated graveyards, associated with a particular church for one or both hamlets. Nor are these trails likely to mark outlying farms: given that the post-Roman sherd finds are the latest activity at the city site, and that much of this material, at least from Middle Byzantine times onwards, is quite recognisable, the finds in question are too thin to constitute rural sites, unlike their predecessors of Early Byzantine times: as a contrast, the 3-ha Byzantine rural settlement at THS14, nearly 2 km south of the southerly city village, was strongly represented in its surface debris (cf. *Testing the Hinterland*: 75–7). Rather, the sherds in the former urban area are more plausibly traces of the in-field manuring that is attested in Byzantine texts (*Testing the Hinterland*: 23–4). If the maps are showing domestic, burial *and* in-field manure scatters, then it is likely that the actual settlement areas are still really small at this stage. The villages of the next phase, we shall argue, represent perhaps as many as 600 inhabitants between them, with clearer distributional patterns to go on; for Middle Byzantine times, we might suggest perhaps half that number of residents. The off-site scatters, too, become far more impressive in the following period. A point of major importance is raised by Vionis (Chapter 8, p. 248) when he notes that, by the 12th century and on into the following period of Frankish rule, the local bishopric was relocated to Askra-Zaratova in the Valley of the Muses, despite the far smaller size of the community at the latter location, in either era. This step may have been taken for security reasons, although we have seen that Askra and Thespiai had been intimately linked since Archaic times.

Frankish (and 'Frankish?') (Fig. 3.82)

The Crusader conquest of Constantinople in 1204 set in train a rapid process of land acquisition by the leading barons and knights of the Fourth Crusade, whereby mainland Greece was carved up into a series of duchies and lesser fiefs. Thanks to the fortunate

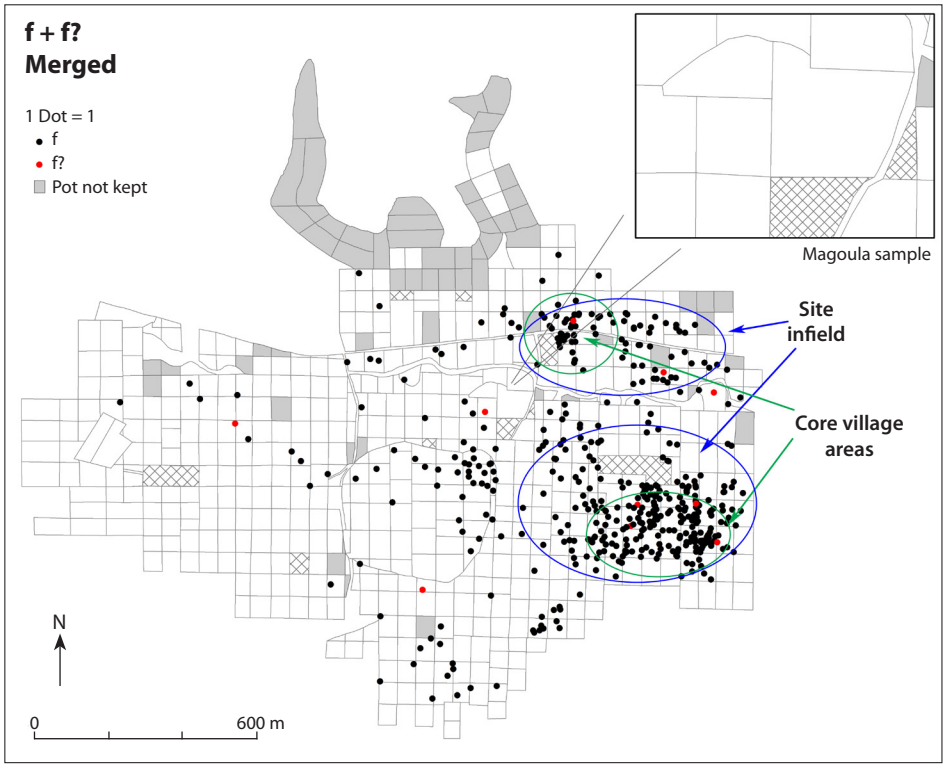


Figure 3.82. *Distribution of Frankish (and 'Frankish?') sherds.*

survival of a papal letter, we know that the village of 'Erimokastro' was awarded as a fief to an Italian-based community of an order of monks called the Premonstratensians (Koder and Hild 1976: 275). This is our earliest reference to the name ('Deserted Castle') by which the predecessor of the modern hill-top village of Thespies was known for the next seven centuries, until the modern era of Classicizing re-naming. It reflects the fact, clearly brought out by the Middle Byzantine map, that the former city centre or *Kastro* had become deserted, forming the etymology for the place name. Elsewhere in Boeotia, for example in the Tanagra region and the city of Koroneia, we have collected evidence for a parallel shift in settlement, away from the Late Roman *refugia* or *kastra* and into new hamlets set in the open landscape (Bintliff, Farinetti *et al.* 2008; Bintliff, Noordervliet *et al.* 2013).

By the earlier Frankish era (early to middle thirteenth century to mid-fourteenth century AD), the 'Merged' Fig. 3.82 gives a full and coherent picture of the northern and southern villages: once again the southern settlement is, in size, much the more significant of the two. But both settlements have now acquired spreads of finds, diffused for some 600 m westwards, into the *Kastro* and past it on both sides. There had already been, in this general direction, a very much fainter scatter of finds in the preceding era; now they have become denser and more widespread, to make credible off-site scatters for the two villages. Just as their haloes and impact on the landscape have grown, so the two villages themselves appear larger. As argued for the Middle Byzantine era, so here we would interpret the picture for the Frankish period as consisting of two settlement cores, with associated cemeteries and cultivation spreads that are not separable within the map.

In some respects, the evidence for village growth and increased intensity of off-site sherd deposition has come as a surprise to historians, who had expected that the arrival of the rapacious Western Crusader lords, with their controlling and exploitative feudal system, would have caused stagnation or even decline in Greek peasant fortunes. The reality seems to have been the opposite: widespread signs of continued growth now seem to be observed generally across Greece (Bintliff 2012, Chapter 19), marking Late Byzantine (for lands still in Byzantine control) or Frankish times. Thespiai–Erimokastro fits well into these recent reappraisals of the Crusader era.

The ancient city had, since Early Byzantine times, effectively reverted to the pattern of non-urban settlement that it had experienced throughout prehistory. But even were part of the supposed 'core' of

Byzantine-Frankish finds to be in reality taken up by cemeteries, there would still be a double settlement, of some aggregate size, to achieve a new peak in Frankish times. Today's wider knowledge of Byzantine and Frankish settlements, from historical sources and archaeology, emphasizes hamlets and villages as the important units of landscape exploitation, taxation and increasingly of feudal wealth. There can be isolated farms and estates, and indeed we have discovered an extensive Frankish-period example lying seasonally under the waters of Lake Hylike at the location of Klimmataria (Bintliff 2012: 420–1, Color pl. 19.1). But at Thespiai we seem to witness substantial sites, with extensions into the off-site, a combination with which we are well familiar. The fertilization of an 'in-field', using household rubbish, on the part of villages of the Byzantine and Frankish period, is supported by two kinds of evidence, and the extensive scale, with considerable deposits up to 600 m west of the villages and lesser finds beyond, is compatible with the large medieval community before us.

Analysis of Byzantine texts has led to a model of an intensively hand-cultivated in-field immediately round the village, with a more extensively farmed and larger area of normal field crops further out. We have been able, building on A. Ducellier's work (see *Testing the Hinterland*, especially pp. 75–7, 285–92), to identify specific large 'haloes' round Late Roman and Medieval settlements, well beyond the range achievable by the unintentional scattering of settlement debris discussed above, and including in some cases wider off-site scatters. The best examples come from larger rural sites, too far from the nearest ancient city for the bigger, urban fertilizing spreads to interfere with their haloes. Let us illustrate this with an example taken from the Tanagra Project: a village at the church of Agios Dimitrios, which is some 6 km from the nearest relevant city, Tanagra itself (*see* Fig. 3.83, *site TS30 and neighbours*). Here the off-site deposition around rural sites (indicated by numbers) is at very low levels, so that almost all the material can be seen to fall within site cores and their inner and outer haloes. Only Site TS 30 itself is Medieval, a Byzantine to Frankish village; the others are farms and villas from the Classical Greek through to the Late Roman age.

Each site has its zone of impact. The scale can be judged from the transects, each 100m in length and 15–16 m wide. Let us focus on the nucleated village at Agios Dimitrios, which is indeed the largest site and, instead of the standard halo of its smaller ancient neighbours, has a wider off-site impact zone. The actual site core, after survey, was found to take up just a small zone around the numbered point; as a result, the greater part of the carpet of sherds, running

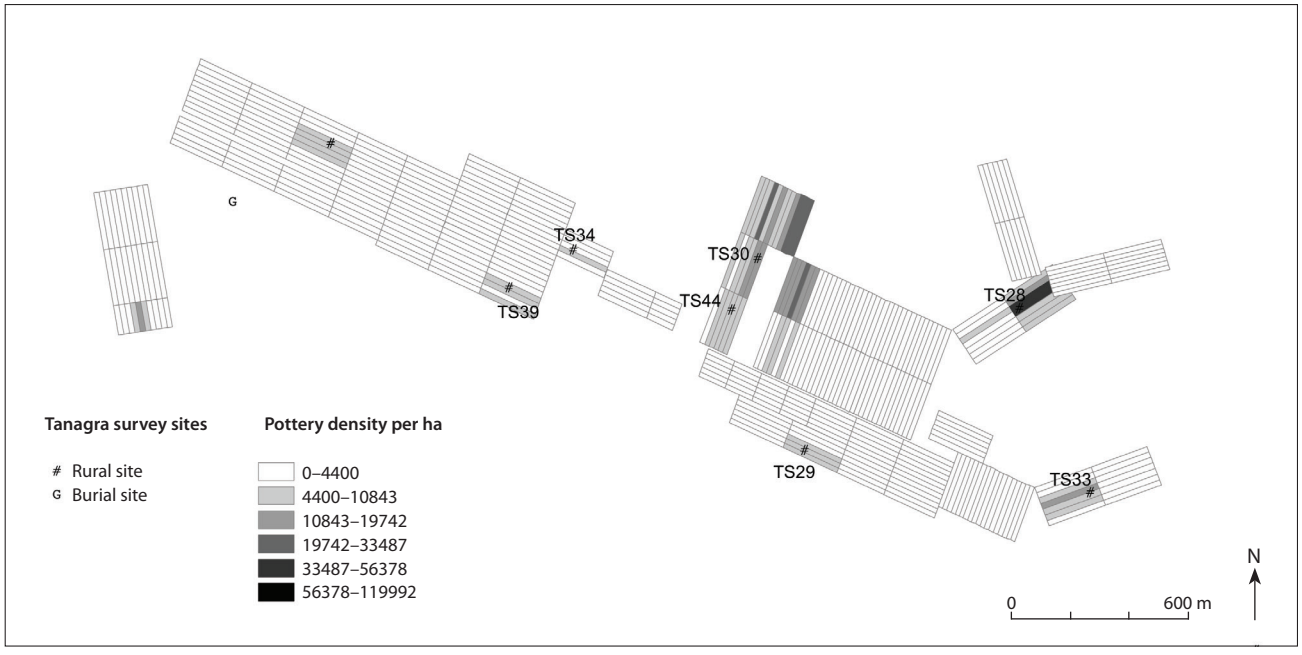


Figure 3.83. *Site TS 30 from the Tanagra Project (right centre), a Byzantine and Frankish village, with other sites of earlier date around it. The field-walking transects are normally 100 m long, and the visibility-corrected densities run from darker shades at 33,487–119,992 sherds per hectare down to white for densities between 4,400 and zero sherds per hectare.*

150 m out from the village, is interpreted as material from in-field manuring.

In the case of the Thespian Medieval settlements, we do not have data for much of their territory lying to the east, before our project's boundaries were reached; but the information for the human impact on the landscape, recovered in the other three directions, is considerable and wide. Analysis of longer-range fertilization in the landscape south of Thespiai showed that this was much practised in Classical Greek times, and we can now see that substantial Medieval nucleations, relative to their smaller size, had a comparable off-site impact; only it is the closer in-fields that are emphasized in the spread of off-site fertilization.

The cores of the two Medieval villages within the city site of Thespiai might fruitfully be compared with that of TS30 at Tanagra: the block of high density at the latter, which comprises core and manured in-field, is more than 150 wide by 150 m long (*c*. 3 ha); from a micro-grid survey of Site TS30, however, we know that perhaps half of the densest area is formed by the site halo and a wider dense off-site in-field; for the true core, the occupied domestic area proper with a church lying near the heart of the site, a size was suggested of some 1.5 ha, far smaller than the Thespiai hamlets.

For the Thespian examples, the analysis is more complex: the much larger 'total site impact zone' formed by the two hamlets is some 600 by 150 m (9 ha) for the northern site and 1400 by 800 m (112 ha) for the southern. The problem for us is to reconstruct the ratio of the inner site-haloes to the occupied cores, for in neither of the Thespian agglomerations is there an obvious cut-off point at which the densest clustering drops unambiguously to a clear intermediate level, before passing into the more obvious dispersed trails and spreads of the outer off-site. Using the insights that we shall gain from the seventeenth-century Fig. 3.86, however, will allow us to recognize the genuine core sectors of the Frankish maps, as there is a subtle differentiation *within* the dense core areas of the two villages (see again Fig. 3.82). If we likewise focus on the densest core of the two Frankish-era Thespian villages, on a first estimate we might propose 3.8 and 6.3 ha respectively for the northern and southern settlements, surrounded by an intermediate site halo, before we reach the far wider but thinner off-site scatters.

One means of estimating possible site population is based on calculations from known ethnohistorical settlement parallels. Thus if we took the figures already proposed from ancient and modern sources for Greek village densities (cf. Bintliff 1997b), an average of some 110 people per domestic hectare would lead to some 165 for Agios Dimitrios at Tanagra, but some 1100 all told for the two Erimokastro villages.

As we shall see, there are some useful population data for the ensuing Turkish period, enabling the conversion of such spatial measurements to real population. In fact, some rather indirect and theoretical calculations would suggest (see further below, pp. 131–4) that, if the case of Erimokastro had been typical, its known village population in 1642, at around 400 people, could have been at a level about 56 per cent of what villages in the region had once reached, at their Early Ottoman flourishing in the mid-sixteenth century. A maximum figure of over 700 inhabitants could then in theory have been possible in the previous century. But in the case of Erimokastro, the double villages had lain abandoned in the sixteenth century, since the Greek population had abandoned the city locality from the end of the Frankish era until the seventeenth century, when the Ottoman population records and our surface survey show their return. These two figures, for Early and Middle Ottoman, one known, the other extrapolated, together with the area of the associated Middle Ottoman settlement, could be used to suggest a more accurate population figure for the areas covered in the similarly flourishing Frankish period, for which we lack population records. Our rough estimate of 1100 inhabitants for the Frankish period, based on surface area, would initially then suggest a joint community perhaps three times larger than its seventeenth-century descendant. Had a sixteenth-century Early Ottoman village existed, we would still expect the Frankish community, during the climactic Medieval era of the thirteenth century AD, to be half as large again as the Early Ottoman one. None of this seems excessively high for the impressive Frankish-era distribution map.

In fact there are reasons to doubt whether either the Greek *polis* or the modern Greek village is the most appropriate analogue for our Boeotian pre-Modern villages, especially from the evidence our Project has collected on the open-plan longhouse pattern, with its wide spacing, typical for the Ottoman-era in Boeotia, including the oldest houses in Thespies village itself (Stedman 1983; see pp. 132–4 below). Evidence from other Boeotia Project sites (to be published in a subsequent volume), such as Upper Haliartos 1-2, indicates that similar long-houses also characterized rural settlements of the Frankish era. Thus we shall shortly present reasons, in the context of the later Turkish-era map, for lowering the typical density of Boeotian pre-Modern villages to some 60 persons per hectare. In that case, our approximately 10 ha of total extent would instead house only around 600 inhabitants, which is very close to the suggestions extrapolated from the Boeotian densities of the sixteenth century AD, another very flourishing period for its villages. The aim of this analysis has of course been to

clarify just how much of the medieval spread is likely to be halo and how much off-site scatter, rather than occupied surface, and it has given some clear results.

Now that we have seen the gross contrast in size between the two Frankish villages, it is satisfying to find that the relative westward, off-site dispersals from the two are on quite different scales. If each village was largely responsible for its own diffused deposition of ceramics, the contrasting density and spread fits their respective sizes. A working definition, by critical land-use scale, for the in-field is as the first 10 minutes' walk from a settlement, which on level terrain would bring one to about 800 m. The dispersal of Medieval sherds outwards from our villages is, as noted, some 600 m for the northern village and 1400 m for the southern (though on largely level ground), but still seems essentially to mark such an intensively cultivated and manured in-field. With TS30/Agios Dimitrios at Tanagra, it seems, the site's smaller population meant that this maximal distance did not have to be attained.

It was the larger of the two hamlets that housed the probable parish church and it was here, too, that the Italian monks, in all likelihood, built their later tower-store for defending and garnering their tithe of the dependent villagers' agricultural produce. The parish church, as discussed earlier, was either abandoned for good at this time, or re-commissioned for the Catholic rite. There are also substantial traces of a wall associated with these features, which might indicate additional monastic buildings. The Agios Athanasios chapel across the river would then perforce have served as parish and burial church for the Orthodox peasantry: a Frankish coin from the graves there provides a circumstantial piece of confirmation.

The 2012–2013 rescue excavations along the main road north of the Kanavaris (Charami, Ekonomou *et al*. 2014) provide significant confirmation for our analysis of the Frankish-era settlement pattern: representatives of the Byzantine Ephoreia uncovered a section of medieval domestic settlement immediately opposite the Agios Athanasios chapel, but to the south, that is on the other side of the modern road. Amongst the structures, a notably large building of over 40 sq. m could be dated to Frankish times through a French coin of the late 13th century. This location lies exactly in the middle of the area identified in Fig. 3.82 as the core of the northern village in this period, focused on the Ag. Athanasios church.

Middle Byzantine/Late Byzantine (Frankish) (and 'Middle Byzantine/Late Byzantine (Frankish?') (Fig. 3.84)

This map displays sherds which could belong to either period, ranging from the middle of the twelfth century to middle of the fourteenth century. Since the Middle Byzantine distribution, as already observed, is in many sectors merely a thinner version of the Frankish, we would not expect to be able to attribute the finds to either one of these two phases. But there are some localities that see expansion in Frankish times, and these zones reappear on this current map. Simple proportionality would suggest that the majority of these pieces belong to the expanded Frankish phase.

Medieval (and 'Medieval?') and Frankish/Turkish (and 'Frankish/Turkish?') (Fig. 3.85)

The generic 'Medieval' finds, covering the whole era from the tenth or eleventh century to the late fifteenth century AD, are so limited in number and definition that the only observable feature is their wide spread: this agrees with the more detailed 'Middle–Late Byzantine' map (Fig. 3.84).

The next chronological phase, Frankish – (early) Turkish, shown on the same map, will as usual include, besides material that is insufficiently diagnostic to assign to either one of these two shorter periods, pieces from a genuinely transitional period, the late Frankish and early Turkish, extending from the mid- to late fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century. All the textual evidence makes it clear that, in Boeotia, a period of drastic depopulation in the fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries gave way to a remarkable recovery, extending from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth (Bintliff 1995; Kiel 1997). This meant that the lack of a clear ceramic differentiation on our part could potentially pose a serious problem. The demographic evidence just cited made it reasonable to expect almost nothing from the earlier part of this period (Late Frankish), and a major, dense spread of ceramics from the latter part (Early Ottoman). In the event the sherd maps are much thinner than that, with a mere nine sherds from the southerly plains village and two from the general area of the northerly one for this transitional era. In the specific case of the community at the site of ancient Thespiai, however, the survey evidence fully supports the background textual sources.

The original dating of the Thespiai material by John Hayes, with some later re-study of a sample by Joanita Vroom, produced a data-base showing a Frankish/Turkish phase that was richly represented in the areas of the two Byzantine and Frankish villages. But a further, definitive re-study of the Medieval material in 2006–2007 by Nassos Vionis, building on his very detailed research on the deserted village sites found by the Boeotia Survey, led to a re-dating of almost all of what had been classified as 'Frankish/Turkish' sherds to the purely Frankish phase, and in

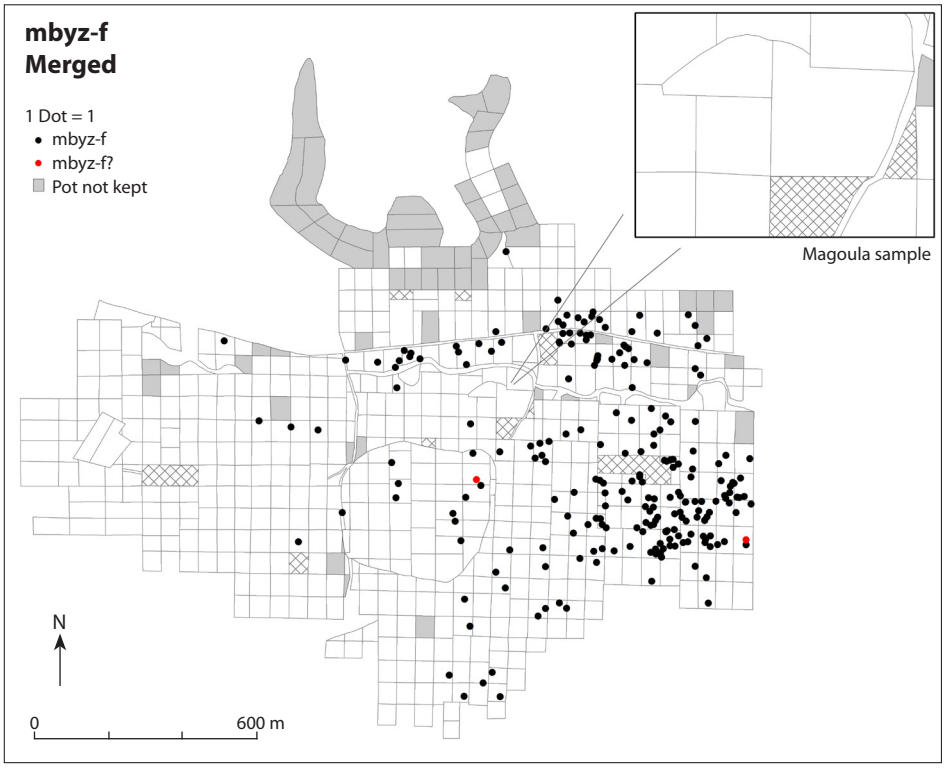


Figure 3.84. *Distribution of Middle Byzantine / Frankish (and 'Middle Byzantine / Frankish?') sherds.*

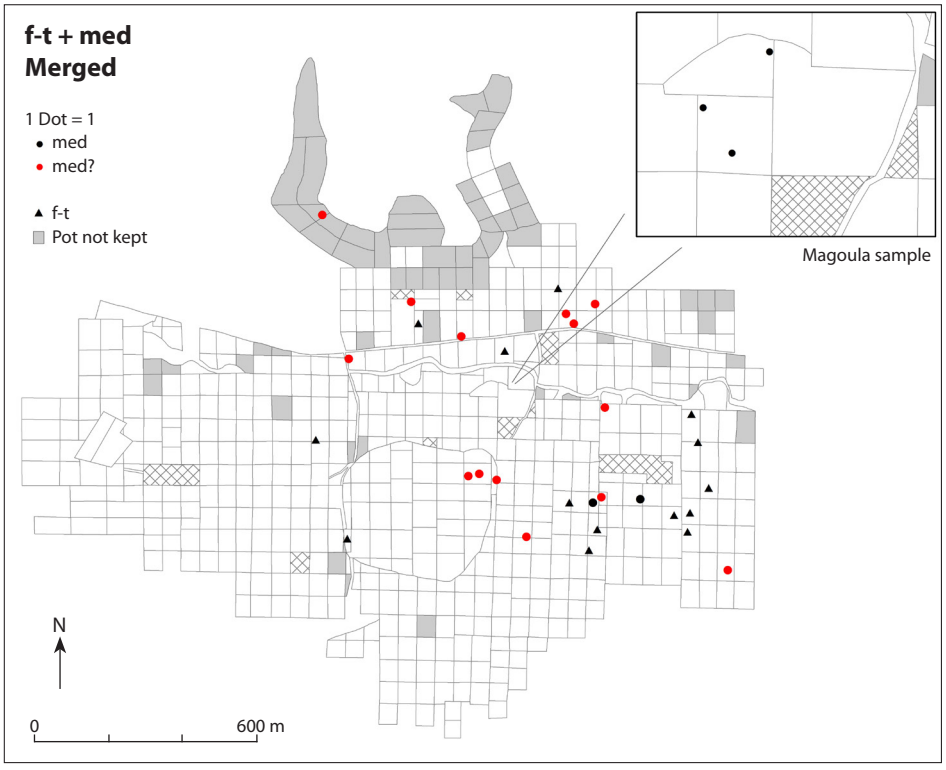


Figure 3.85. *Combined distribution of Medieval with Frankish / Turkish sherds.*

some cases even to a late stage of Middle Byzantine. So little is left, in fact, that we can safely conclude that no significant settlement activity occurred on the ancient city site during this transitional era. The reasons for this are fortunately made clear in our historical sources.

The Ottoman archives are unambiguous (Bintliff 1995): after the mention in a Papal letter (Koder and Hild 1976: 275) of the handing over of the village of Erimokastro to the monastic order of the Premonstratenses from Brindisi in 1212 (see p. 125), no village of this name is present in the Early Ottoman archives, extending down to 1570. Yet Erimokastro reappears in the later Ottoman period tax archives of the seventeenth century, and a settlement on the ancient city site remained in existence until its abandonment, observed by Leake, in the opening years of the nineteenth century. Instead, for the missing fifteenth- and sixteenth-century early Ottoman period, the contemporary tax records show the foundation of the new Albanian settlement of Kobila/Kobili (almost certainly the later Kaskaveli and modern village of Leondari), on the eastern hill-top above the ancient site. Its placing, close to but not superimposed on the Frankish village, is characteristic of the sponsored colonization of Albanians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and fits well with the apparent near-desertion of the Medieval villages below.

The two modern villages on the hills above the ancient city, Leondari and Thespies, are adjacent but separated by a ravine; it is surely significant that it was the eastern hill, the one immediately overlooking the now largely abandoned medieval villages, which was chosen for this first colonization, rather than the western one on which stands the other, later village, eventually to take over the name of Erimokastro from the Medieval settlement below and only recently re-named as Thespies. This western village, on the evidence of Wheler, included 'Greek' families in the late seventeenth century, when the tax records suggest it had only recently been settled, at the same time as the medieval village in the plain below was re-founded. These Greeks may have been returning descendants of the Medieval population, who had left the ancient site below in the fourteenth century for another location – most likely to merge with the villagers of Askra-Zaratova in the adjacent Valley of the Muses, which greatly expands in size exactly in the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries and to which, as mentioned earlier (p. 125), the bishopric of Thespiai-Erimokastro and the plains had long since been displaced. The emptying of the Boeotian countryside and the gathering of the Greek population into larger refuge villages in remoter, often hill-top locations, is a widespread reaction to the continual warfare and plague of the fourteenth century (Bintliff 1995; 2012, Chapter 19). The very limited finds in and around the plains villages then correctly indicate the lack of any permanent settlement, but suggest some kind of low-impact activity for these centuries – possibly seasonal cultivation by the former Erimokastro villagers from their refuge settlement in the Valley of the Muses.

Turkish (and 'Turkish?') (Fig. 3.86)

The material in this category is considered by our ceramic specialists (John Hayes, Nassos Vionis) to belong primarily to the Middle and Late Ottoman phases, extending roughly from the late sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century in date. By the time that the name of Erimokastro reappears in the archives in the mid-seventeenth century as just noted, a more complex settlement pattern is coming into existence, fortunately known to us from the early eye-witness account of George Wheler in 1676, but also indicated by details within the Ottoman records. For the seventeenth century, the Ottoman tax archive sources list both Kobila/Kobili (later Kaskaveli, today Leondari) and Erimokastro (today, Thespies), the two hill-top villages of modern times. But Wheler and his successors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also record a third settlement on the ancient site below: for Wheler, this was just part of 'Rimokastro', but later travellers most often use the name of 'Lefka'. The archaeological evidence does indeed show apparent Ottoman-period settlement at both the Medieval village locations in the plain, although it is notably thinner in finds than in Medieval times, especially the northerly example; together, these locations must have become known as Lefka.

But when had the hill-top 'Erimokastro' been founded, taking over the name of the Medieval village below? Survey around the outskirts of the modern village has not located significant pre-Turkish finds. It seems most likely, from its absence and then reappearance in the Ottoman tax records, that it arose as a foundation in the seventeenth century, after the medieval village of the same name, on the plain below, had suffered apparent desertion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This would fit the probable age of the regular, if dispersed, 'longhouse' settlement pattern noted by Nancy Stedman for the core area of modern Thespies village (Stedman 1983 and, more briefly, 1996). Wheler records a single community of 'Rimokastro' made up of three clusters of houses, one on the plain and two above, with a mixed Albanian-Greek and a slight Turkish element in their population. The survey data from the former village sites in the plain and the Ottoman sources combine to argue that

the disappearance of Greek settlement encouraged re-colonization of the general locality by the fifteenth century, with the foundation of the Albanian-speaking eastern hilltop village of Kobila (modern Leondari). Only in the seventeenth century do the tax records indicate the reappearance of an 'Erimokastro' village, which Wheler presents as having three foci, including the western and eastern hill-tops (he includes Kobila into 'greater' Erimokastro) and the deserted plains village locations. While the survey finds might allow of a late sixteenth-century repopulation of Greek speakers, this community is still absent from the records as late as 1570, indicating a somewhat later return of the likely descendants of the villagers from Frankish times, still attached to their former community name.

The Turkish material, besides registering the reappearance of two small settlements on the plain, in the same localities as before and, once again, with the southern as the more extensive, shows thin scatters again spreading out from the two foci, as in the Medieval era. These could mark either mere rubbish disposal, or perhaps deliberate fertilizing. It is possible that the slight focus in the north-western zone across the Kanavaris could mark waste disposal out of the new village of Erimokastro (Thespies), either as simple dumping or as the deliberate disposal of rubbish on cultivated land. The special historical relationship that we are postulating between the new hill-top Erimokastro village and its roughly contemporaneously re-founded plains satellites at 'Lefka', is supported by the intriguing fact that the modern parish boundary runs diagonally south-eastwards, leaving the bulk of the ancient city site to be exploited by modern 'Thespies'. If Erimokastro/Thespies was in part a re-settlement of the displaced Erimokastro in the plain, Albanian Leondari had largely to make do with a residual, spatially separate and less convenient territory. If the Greek population on the ancient city site had, since Middle Byzantine times, been in ecclesiastical dependency on Askra-Zaratova in the Valley of the Muses, then even after fleeing to the safer refuge of its nearby Early Ottoman successor at Site VM 4 in the fourteenth century, they could well have retained their land-owning rights, thus limiting the territory available for the new Albanian village of Kobila to a distribution east of the city site, as to this day. Site VM 4 certainly takes off in size between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, at a scale that suggests inward migration from elsewhere, and well beyond any reasonable internal growth (Bintliff 2000: Figs. 15–16).

The Ottoman archives also provide information on population size. Here we draw on the unpublished Gazetteer, Bintliff, Kiel, Dunn and Sauerwein (1997) and primarily on Machiel Kiel's transcriptions of the Ottoman tax records for us. He has demonstrated (Kiel 1997) that, whereas the fifteenth–sixteenth-century Ottoman records can be used as reasonable population indices, those of the seventeenth century and later conceal some 25 per cent of the actual resident population. Below, we have modified the numbers to take account of this:

ERIMOKASTRO: first appears as a village in 1642, then reappears in 1646 and 1655, with *c*. 400 (1642) and *c*. 275 (1646 and 1655) people, but is missing from the 1687 registers.

ZOGRA KOBILI/ZAGRA KUBLI: seems to appear first as Kobila, an Albanian *katun* (semi-permanent settlement) of *c*. 75 people, in 1466. In 1506, however, it has shrunk to a mere 25 people: Kiel argues that part of the missing population has left to found another village, Kosta Zogra, newly recorded and with 70 inhabitants. 'Konbili' is next recorded in 1540 and 1570, with respectively 225 and 200 people. In the seventeenth-century records, it is missing in 1642, reappears in 1646 with 140 inhabitants, and again seems to be missing in 1687.

Machiel Kiel (*pers. comm.*) is confident that the absence of Erimokastro from the fifteenth–sixteenth-century archives, leaving the new Albanian Kobili to stand alone, reflects reality; and this is supported archaeologically by the gap, corresponding to this period, in our sherd collections from the plains villages. We have speculated that these village populations had fled elsewhere (to our site VM4, the descendant of Askra-Zaratova, now called Panagia and not far to the west) in the troubled fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries; but they must have retained memory of their former community homes and, we would now argue, the right of cultivation there. The description by Wheler in 1676 now includes both the villages on the hill-tops (modern Thespies/Erimokastro as well as the older Leondari/Kobila/Kaskaveli), as well as a revived village on the medieval settlement site in the plains. The fact that he groups all three together under the name of 'Rimokastro' will help us solve the mysterious variations in the Ottoman tax archives, Erimokastro being a name later confined to the western hill village.

There is a possible explanation for these complex variations, one already hinted at by the dramatic drop in the number of recorded families for the Erimokastro settlement, in the space of the four years between 1642 and 1646. This probably reflects no more than the variable inclusion or exclusion of the other two contemporary villages under the official designation

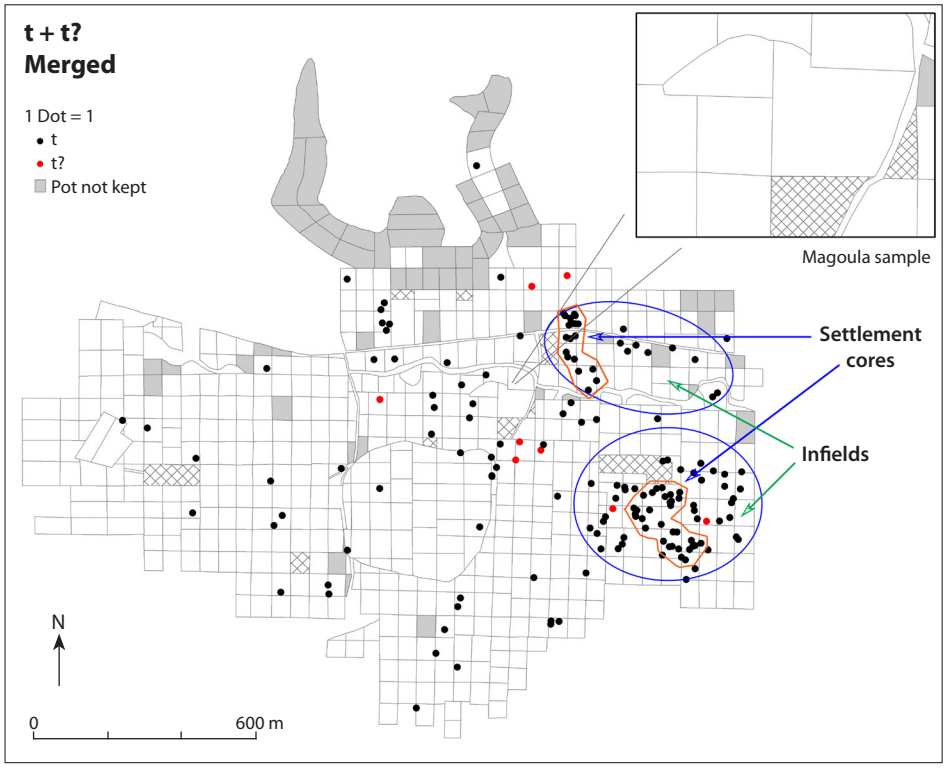


Figure 3.86. *Distribution of Turkish (and 'Turkish?') sherds.*

of 'Erimokastro'. Whereas Wheler seems to know only the name of 'Rimokastro', covering all three settlements, many later travellers explicitly distinguish 'Kaskaveli' and 'Lefka' from Erimokastro. It thus appears likely that, in the record for 1642, Kobila/Kobili was taxed as part of Erimokastro but, in subsequent lists, in a separate entry now lost. This is supported by a close correspondence in the figures: in 1646, Erimokastro is listed with *c.* 275 inhabitants, Kobila with 140, compared with the single Erimokastro figure for 1642 of 400 people. In the 1687 record just one figure is again recorded, of 140 people, which must surely be for Kobila only. The plains village(s), on the other hand, must have continued to be subsumed into the 'Erimokastro' entries in the Ottoman archive since, as noted above, the territory in the plain has, since their final abandonment, been treated as part of the parish of Erimokastro/Thespies down to the present day.

Kobila had clearly been an Albanian foundation, yet a significant Greek population is noted by Wheler for the triad of villages; this, together with the revival of the name of Erimokastro in a new, secondary location and the reoccupation of its original village localities in the plain, hints strongly at the return of a substantial Greek population. We could tentatively suggest that both the hill-top Erimokastro and the revived plains settlements were largely peopled by resettled Greeks, while Kobila remained essentially Albanian. This would imply that, from the 1640s on, resettled Greeks made up some two-thirds of the total population, with most of the remainder living in the eastern hill village of Kobila/Kaskaveli/Leondari. The population of Kobila had stood at around 200 people in 1570, but the figure of 140 for 1687 would imply that the latter had suffered a fairly steep demographic decline.

If the community of Kobila could have dropped in size to as few as 140 people in the late seventeenth century, then it is credible for the two Greek communities of Erimokastro, on the hill-top and in the plain, together to have amounted to the *c.* 275 recorded, well below the 600 we have calculated for the Frankish era.

Here it is desirable to make a brief diversion, as promised above (p. 127), to consider the nature of Early Modern Boeotian domestic housing and its demographic implications. Our researches into traditional housing in pre-Modern Boeotia have identified the single-storey long-house as the dominant village house type from the Medieval era (cf. Sigalos 2004; Bintliff 2012, Ch. 21). The plans of surviving longhouses at Thespies made by Stedman (Fig. 3.87)

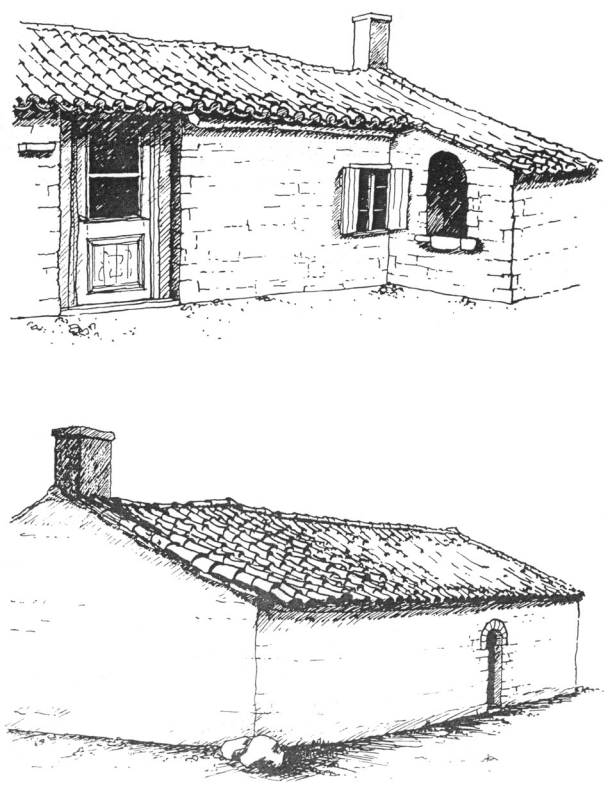


Figure 3.87. *The oldest house in Thespies surviving to the early 1980s, believed to be then some 200 years old. Drawing by Nancy Stedman (1983). The location of this house within the village is shown in Fig. 3.89.*

and the remarkable photograph of around 1890 by French archaeologists shown in Fig. 3.88, agree with the plans of a number of deserted pre-Modern villages surveyed in the course of our Project. The long-houses are dispersed in parallel rows with much empty space between them, undivided and used for open-air activities by their occupants. It seems reasonably clear that, in such communities, the density of population is decidedly lower than 110 people per hectare. It is thus advisable to go for a much lower figure, around a half of that, perhaps only 60 or so people per hectare, a figure lower by a margin of almost one-half than that for the modern villages studied in Messenia (Bintliff 1997 b).

The true spatial extent of the hill-top Erimokastro in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is obscure, but Nancy Stedman, by mapping the surviving traditional long-houses, was able to draw a rough outline of an original village core. This was a small area, comparable to those of the densest core of the two plains settlements (Fig. 3.89: Stedman 1983). It appears as a mere hectare or two on her provisional plan, but this marks only the area where traditional houses remained standing in the early 1980s, and is to be taken as a minimum. But the large bank also mapped to the north and west, if a defence work on the weakest side of the village, would set an upper limit to the extent of the community in the insecure period between the seventeenth and the late nineteenth centuries AD. On a basis around 60 people per hectare,



Figure 3.88. *A photograph, taken around 1890 in the heart of the modern hill-top village of Thespies, and illustrating a very low density of settlement. (Courtesy of the Photothèque, École française d'Athènes).*

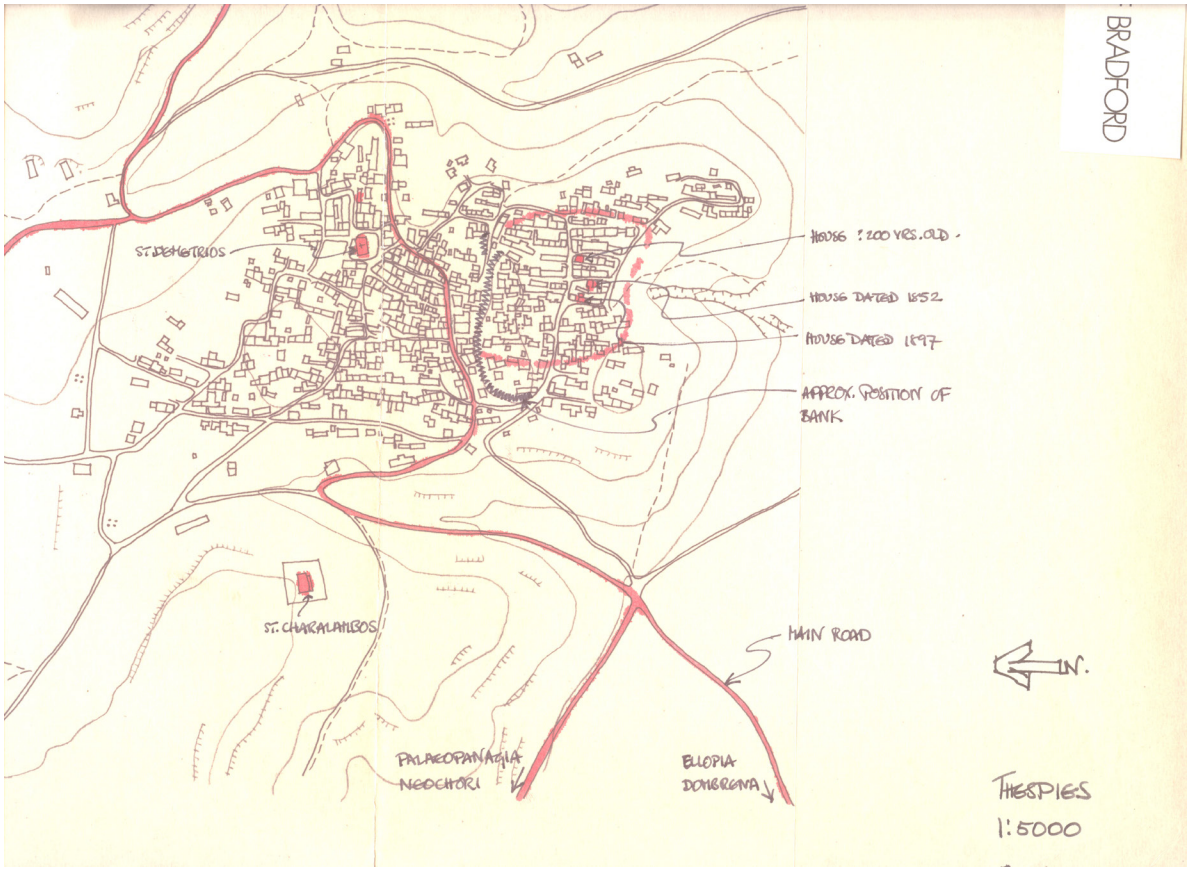


Figure 3.89. *Unpublished plan of Thespies village by N. Stedman (1983) showing the possible original village core and the oldest houses. The one marked '200 years old' is shown in Fig. 3.87.*

this would result in displacing the larger part of the Erimokastro population (excluding Kobila-Leondari) to the two later Ottoman plains villages. Out of a total of 275 people, perhaps a mere 100 or so might have resided in the hill-top community, with the remaining 175 living down on the ancient city site. This would require around 3 ha of domestic space shared between the two plains villages.

As noted earlier, it is not immediately clear where the distinction lies between village cores and haloes on the Turkish-era map; but 3 ha would take up some 10 of the typical survey units of 60 x 50 m, so on Fig. 3.86 we have sought to enclose the densest areas of both villages within roughly that number of units.

The very small scale of each settlement emerges clearly from Wheler's comment (see Chapter 2, p. 6) that, in the late seventeenth century, they amounted to 'three little knots of houses, two upon the hill and one below'. We must suppose that his observation was made from the hill-top, as there still appear to have been two distinct settlements, a few hundred metres apart, on the plain below.

Each of the two hamlets on the plain is bounded by what seems to be a clear in-field halo of intermediate density, separate from the much thinner and wider scatters that we interpret as mere rubbish disposal or light intentional manuring. The small dense spot in the western trans-Kanavaris sector is, we suspect, produced by similar activities, but in this case emanating from the new hill-top village of Erimokastro above it.

The regional picture for Boeotia as a whole indicates sharp overall decline in village populations everywhere, as between the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century records (Bintliff 1995; Kiel 1997). For example, the Ottoman records for Panagia (modern Palaiopanagia, later still Askri/Askraia), just a few kilometres to the west at the mouth of the Valley of the Muses, give a maximum population of about 1075 for 1570, falling to about 335 by 1642. Although steep decline over this period is so widespread, one additional element at Panagia could well be that of re-location. The seventeenth-century record indicates that the village was sub-divided into some 13 separate serf estates or *çiftliks*. Wheler already notes, a mere

generation later, that the early Ottoman village, 'Old Panagia', at our Site VM 4 in the Valley of the Muses, had been abandoned and settlement re-located to the modern village location at the valley mouth, that is Panagia. Back in the final Frankish–Early Turkish period, Panagia had been considered as a refuge community where the Greek population clustered. A reconstruction in which the families from the original village of Erimokastro, on the ancient site, first migrated here in the troubled final Frankish fourteenth century, then retraced their steps in the seventeenth century, becomes steadily more attractive: especially if, as we have just suggested, only a section of the returning population chose to reoccupy the old Erimokastro, in the remains of the Frankish-era settlements on the plain, while the new hill-top Erimokastro was to grow so fast that it had already become, by the late seventeenth century, as large as its fellow settlements around the site of ancient Thespiai. The break-up of the once large village of Panagia may thus have led not only to the successful foundation of a new village, but also to the resettlement of an old one.

The shift of the Ottoman Balkan rural economy, from a predominance of free villages to a large proportion of serf-estates or *çiftliks*, would have encouraged the relocation of formerly nucleated peasant villages into smaller areas which they directly farmed under the new owners or managers. We can reasonably associate the break-up of the large 'old Panagia' village at Site VM4 into its 13 estates with a physical dispersal of its population, of which only a part would have moved a kilometre downhill to the modern village of Palaiopanagia/Askri. We would now argue that almost 300 villagers returned to their medieval home of Erimokastro, which they may well have been farming at a distance since the late 13th century. The demographic collapse at Palaeopanagia, losing two-thirds of its sixteenth-century size over 70 years, appears less drastic if we counterbalance it with the Erimokastro community: this reduces the decline to 57 per cent, remarkably close to the average decline of Boeotian village size between the late sixteenth and mid seventeenth centuries of 54 per cent (Kiel 1997, Table VII p. 349).

By 1805 Dodwell describes a (now apparently single) 'small village called *Lefka*… in the vicinity' of the ancient site. Leake is more helpfully precise: 'The place is called *Lefka*, from a village of that name no longer in existence… When I visited these ruins in 1802, there were still three inhabited cottages at Lefka, but these are now [that is, in February 1806] deserted and ruined. In the time of Wheler the village appears to have been nearly of the same size as Rimokastro or Kaskaveli' (see Chapter 2, p. 10). So, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the population of the settlement on the plain can hardly have been more than 15 to 20 people.

A final element can be added to the story of the village in the plains. When the Greek Orthodox population re-settled the two hamlets here, as well as re-founding the hill-top village of today, only the northerly Athanasios village church was brought back into commission. This is apparent from the eighteenth-century frescoes, recorded during the conservation work of 1973 (Lazaridis 1977). Nonetheless, the weight of population must gradually have begun to move away to the hill-top site, anticipating the final abandonment of lowland 'Lefka' at the very beginning of the nineteenth century. There followed neglect even of the Athanasios church, leading to an official request for conservation work in the early 1970s. Well before then, a grand cemetery church had been constructed outside modern Thespies on the western slope, and a parish church within the village. Yet as late as the 1920's, village women were still gathering at the spring beside the Makri Ekklesia to do their washing (Fig. 2.2, above p. 17).

Early Modern (and 'Early Modern?') (Fig. 3.90)

By the mature nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which form the period to which these finds belong, we know that all permanent settlement on the ancient site in the plain had been abandoned. Then, as today, there was evidently no dispersed rural settlement outside the two hill-top villages, apart from field houses in temporary agricultural use, and other recorded activities such as the continuing use of the Varvaka fountain building beside the *Makri Ekklesia* (compare again Fig. 2.2), in the far east of the city grid, and of the other springs on the ancient site. The finds should thus be almost entirely generated by disposal out of the two villages, and by other activities centred on them. The general impression given by the maps is one of almost random dispersal, but the tendency, first noted in Ottoman times (p. 131), for a rise in density towards the north-western corner of the grid, the best route of access to and from Thespies village, can again be observed. The pattern is less easy to interpret in terms of human actions. It might reflect a continuation of deliberate fertilization, using village waste, along with casual discard during agricultural and pastoral activities at the sites of field huts and spring sources; or it might represent nothing more than waste disposal. The public removal of village waste in rural Greece is of fairly recent introduction and, even today, is not yet practised universally: the dumping of plastic bags of rubbish or larger redundant objects by road-sides, field edges or at random points in the

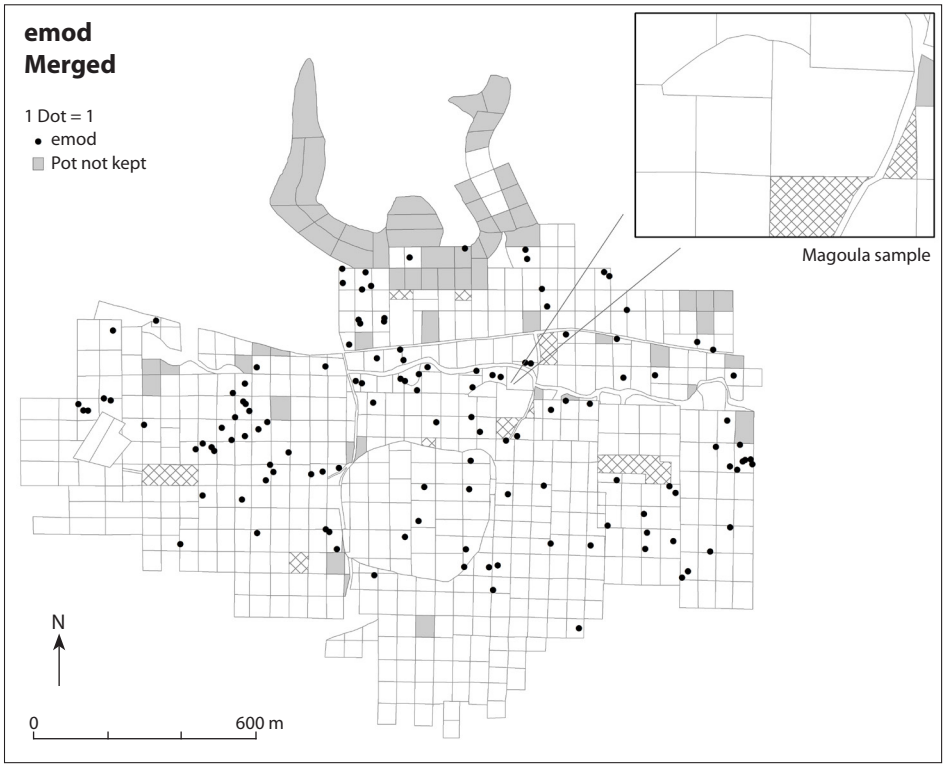


Figure 3.90. *Distribution of Early Modern sherds.*



Figure 3.91. *Random rubbish disposal in a field near Kleidi, eastern Boeotia.*

landscape is still fairly common (Fig. 3.91, taken near the village of Kleidi in eastern Boeotia). We are unable to disentangle these diverse factors in this and the following maps of the Modern era, but they do give an indirect indication of the zones of land-use of the village of Thespies.

Modern (and 'Modern?') (Fig. 3.92)

The densest spread is again in the north-west, now even clearer than on the preceding map. This distribution can be broadly interpreted along the same general lines as those of the previous 'Early Modern' set, that is as off-site material generated by the modern hill-top village of Thespies, lying to the north of the central and western parts of the grid. As we get further away from access to modern Erimokastro, the density generally thins out.

During this period, however, the advent of chemical fertilizers, and the increased reliance on them since World War II, has made traditional manure-fertilization redundant, so we need to turn to other explanations. Increasingly, such contributory factors as those mentioned above may now have become the main explanation for our distribution. Thus 'Modern' sherds could have emanated from the simple dumping of rubbish on the sides of roads and fields, preferable both in terms of available space and of regulatory restrictions on the edges of villages; or from the seasonal use of temporary field huts, sometimes in connection with pump-houses for irrigation or storage, or even for nothing more than siestas during long days in the fields. The ease with which farmers' trucks could indulge in 'fly-tipping' of this kind, combined with pressure to keep waste from the edges of villages, must have created a contrast with pre-motorized behaviour.

The last two maps show an imbalance towards the parts of the grid closest to the village; but another, lesser clustering of 'Modern' finds starts beside the western stretch of the modern tarmac road running across the grid, and then extends further east, down to and across the river. The road-side dumping along this, the main east–west road to Thebes, may have involved people from neighbouring villages too; but the extended deposition further south can only mean that some of the inhabitants of Thespies village adopted the least-effort solution of dumping their waste, presumably on their own fields, in the fairly near vicinity of the settlement.

From the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth, communities throughout Greece were encouraged by the state, or themselves volunteered,

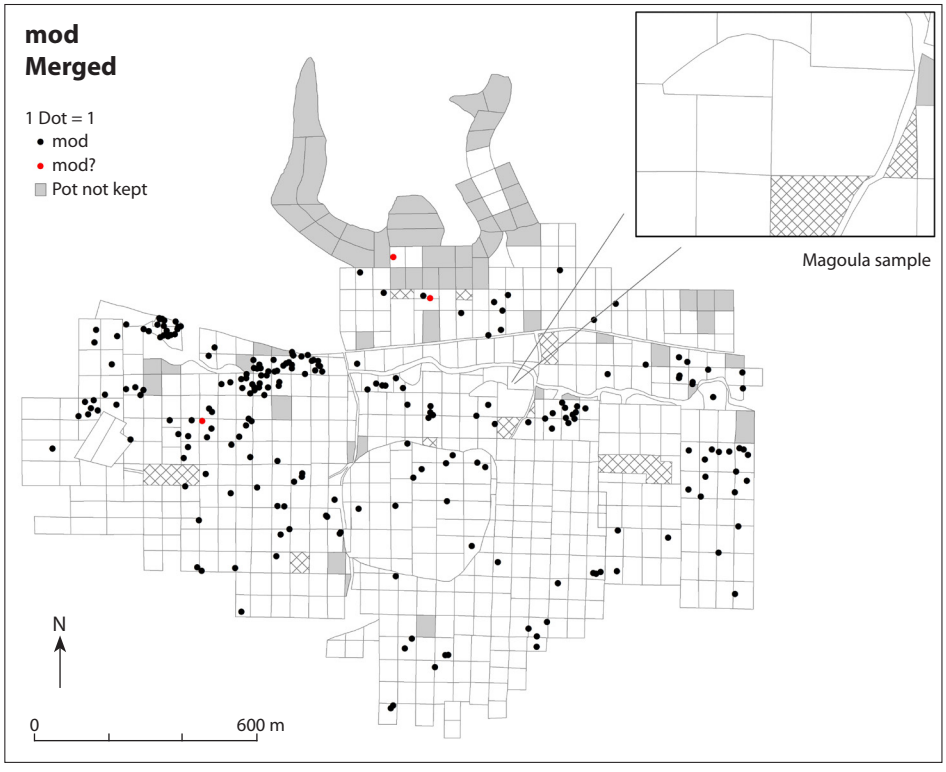


Figure 3.92. *Distribution of Modern (and 'Modern?') sherds.*



Figure 3.93. *Modern community-sponsored monument to the 700 Thespians at Thermopylai.*

to replace village names that were of non-Greek origin, or without Classical associations, with those that would link them to the glorious centuries of independent cities (Alexandri 2002). 'Erimokastro' had retained a local significance while the *Kastro* ruin was still impressive; but this was becoming an increasingly indistinct feature in the landscape after the late nineteenth-century demolition by Jamot, and in any case had no Classical context. By now, the community living above the ancient site was well aware that it had inherited the city and part of the territory of ancient Thespiai, so prompting the appropriate name change to Thespies. Neighbouring Kaskaveli made do with a name of ancient appearance – Leondarion – but chosen with reference to Stamatakis's discovery of a lion monument on the site of the Polyandrion in 1882 (see Chapter 2, p. 15).

Thus the people of Thespies, like other Greek communities, could partake of the distant Classical past, if at the cost of eliding the intervening millennia. The community erected a monument to the 700 Thespians who had died heroically alongside the Spartans at Thermopylai in Lokris, in 480 BC: it stands at a high point looking down on the ancient battlefield site (Fig. 3.93).

But while the 300 Spartans have continued to exercise a world-wide fascination through popular and semi-popular books, not to mention a bizarre Hollywood fantasy film (*300*, made in 2007 but based on a 1998 comic-book series), the unfortunate Thespians who fell on the same occasion have been largely ignored by the world at large. A local businessman of standing has responded to this neglect of his community's 'place in time', by paying for a second monument at Thespies itself, standing above the main road junction below the village and hence more visible to through traffic (Fig. 3.94) (see Bintliff 2013 for discussion of other examples of local communities creating their own sense of identity). The main motive for sponsoring the new memorial is made clear by the inscription, in Greek and English: 'Still verbal history continues for 25 centuries to present the Spartans only. This is offensive for me and I feel the duty to castigate this injustice. It's as if Thermopylae was only a Spartan issue.' It is said that Mr. Liakos-Kelepis' pride in being



Figure 3.94. *The new monument to the 700 Thespians, erected by 'Constantinos D. Liakos-Kelepis. Thespian', at his home village.*

a Thespian went further, in that the warrior's features are allegedly modelled on those of the sponsor.

As outsiders, we can only welcome the fact that the community which owns and cultivates the land of an ancient site, recognizes its historic importance. Yet so far this does not extend to any general recognition of where the city actually lay, let alone to a communal concern to protect the surviving remains on and below the surface. In 2014, when we were returning crates of surface finds to the Thespies Museum, a local school-teacher stopped to ask us if we knew where the city of Thespiai lay, as neither he nor his class had any idea.

A wider issue is that elision just mentioned, of the pre-urban and post-urban phases of community life at the city site, extending indeed to a lack of familiarity with the origin and development of the recent villages themselves. These histories, alternative or complementary to that of the Greco-Roman city, risk total oblivion outside of academia; especially if the incredibly rich, 8000-year-long story of human life in this particular landscape becomes compressed, not just into the image of modern Thespies as the descendant of ancient classical Thespiai, but even into a single episode in national Greek memory.

In this volume we have attempted to populate the city location from the earliest recorded, Neolithic occupation down to the final, observed abandonment of the city site, and beyond it to the birth and recent development of the modern village of Thespies. It is our hope that communicating our results, not just through this volume – intended for an academic audience – but through more accessible publications and local lectures (such as we have given by invitation at Askri and Koroneia villages), and through the Web, can help to re-position modern Thespies into a far longer, more diverse narrative of human life within its immediate setting, and thence to encourage a greater sense of heritage and sensitivity from local communities to known or as yet undiscovered 'ruins in the landscape'.



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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