NEWS

492.0.01 Forthcoming Teiresias Supplements Online Volume 3

The third volume in the series will be published in the spring of 2020:

S. Scharff, ed., Beyond the Big Four. Local Games in Ancient Greek Athletic Culture (forthcoming, https://www.uni-muenster.de/Ejournals/index.php/tso/index)

Table of contents:

(1) Sebastian Scharff (Münster), Preface
(2) Christian Mann (Mannheim), Introduction
(3) Denver Graninger (Riverside, CA), The Eleutheria and Larisa
(4) Andrew Lepke (Münster), Creating an Alternative. The Aitolian Contest at Delphi and Elsewhere
(5) Andrew Lepke (Münster), Creating an Alternative. The Aitolian Contest at Delphi and Elsewhere
(6) Angela Ganter (Regensburg), The Universe in a Nutshell: The Theban Herakleia
(7) Michael Jung (Münster), Die Eleutherien von Plataiai
(8) Albert Schachter (Montreal), Local Games of Thespiai
(9) Salvatore Tufano (Rome), The Local Games of Lebadeia and Koroneia
(10) Yannis Kalliontzis (Washington, DC), The Amphiaraiia and Oropos
(11) Andrew Farrington (Komotini), The Agonistic Festivals of Sikyon
In 2019 a major aspect of the Boeotia teamwork was the preparation of the chapters for the final monograph (Boeotia volume 3) of our work at the northern Boeotia ancient city of Hyettos and its immediate countryside. Chapters on the geology, pedology and land use potential of the landscape by Prof. R. Shiel (Newcastle), Dr. K. Wilkinson (Winchester) and Prof. J. Bintliff (Leiden/Edinburgh), are essential foundations for the subsequent chapters, composed by Prof. Bintliff and the ceramic specialist team, where the site and offsite distributions of surface ceramics are analysed by period to reveal long-term trends in human activity within the city and its surrounding countryside from the Neolithic to the Modern era. A chapter on the chemical trace element analysis of the soils across the ancient city site was prepared by Prof. Bintliff, Prof. de Gryse (Leuven), Dr. A. Sarris (FORTH, Rethymnon) and other project fieldwork staff. This revealed the close correlation between trace metal contamination of the soil and the boundaries of the occupation zone within the city site (the so-called “habitation effect”), and will be paired with hitherto unpublished parallel results across the ancient city of Thespiai in S.W. Boeotia.

A survey of the historical and epigraphic sources by Prof. A. Snodgrass (Cambridge), Prof. C. Müller (Paris Nanterre), Dr. A. Vionis (University of Cyprus) and Prof. M. Kiel (Bonn) brings rich interpretative aid to the results of the surface survey, to which can also be added the standing architecture, churches and wall-paintings of ancient, medieval and Ottoman-era date documented by the Project, and not least the almost complete geophysical survey of the city by Dr. Sarris and of two rural villa sites by Dr. M. Gillings. A major discovery was the matching of archival data, dated wall-paintings and the site ceramics of the Middle Byzantine, Frankish and Ottoman eras, allowing us to separate village locations adjacent to and succeeding the ancient city, associated with particular ethnic groups and political contexts (independent Greek, then Albanian villagers and then dependent Albanian labourers on an Orthodox monastic estate). Following a recent pioneering article on other sites by our post-Roman ceramic specialist Dr. Vionis, it will be possible for these rural sites (CN3 and CN4) to relate significant aspects of material culture to very different socio-economic patterns (wealth, imports and exports, dietary and culinary preferences) across the 1000 years represented.

As noted in our 2018 report, the Hyettos survey allows us to follow the pattern of life from Neolithic village to Greco-Roman city at the urban centre, and in its rural surroundings through 16 rural sites and an immense mass of offsite ceramic data, to document a

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1 This research is largely funded by the INSTAP Foundation, with additional support from the Leverhulme Foundation.

dramatically changing pattern of farms and villages from the Neolithic to the later 19th century, when the landscape finally became deserted.

The next rural project lined-up for publication is the Valley of the Muses and the site of Askra, in S.W. Bocotia. Our earlier complete survey of the region ³ revealed over 50 archaeological sites, including a major Bronze Age village at the location of the settlement where the early historic poet Hesiod lived – ancient Askra. A full documentation of this long-lived community was carried out and also at its successor site VM4, where a large deserted village of some 1000 inhabitants provided rich Medieval to Ottoman ceramic finds, that can be matched to detailed lists of its population, agriculture and landscape investments in Ottoman archives. ⁴ The preparation of chapters for this final monograph is planned for 2020, but minor fieldwork continued in 2019 with further drone photography of some representative rural sites by Dr. L. Donnellan (Aarhus University). Whereas many survey sites are unenlightened by ground photographs, especially if in olive groves, the drone allows us to choose height and angle of view for the camera mounted on the drone, to highlight the placing of the site in the landscape (slope, relation to soils and general topography). Two examples are given in the images attached to this report. Site CN3 [Figure 1] from the Hyettos countryside is the most important site outside of the ancient city, a major Bronze Age and Medieval village; the photo clarified its location in a shallow but well-watered valley for irrigated crops, with rich arable for dry-farming on either side. The burial church and parish church of the deserted villages are marked by bright green trees in the lower right and upper left. A second example comes from the Valley of the Muses [Figure 2], site VM3: it occupies the fertile ploughed field amidst rockier terrain.


The city and countryside of ancient Haliartos in Central Boeotia is due to be prepared as a final monograph in 2021. Part of the longer-term preparation for this volume has been a complete survey of the standing architecture (city and acropolis defence walls, streets, public space and house layout). This is greatly enhanced by the fact that the town was destroyed by the Romans in 171 BC and only the Acropolis was significantly reoccupied subsequently, so that the main town is perfectly preserved as stone foundations at shallow depth or on the surface. A complete geophysical survey of the Lower Town by Dr. Sarris in previous years has now been enriched in 2018 and 2019 by surface mapping of the considerable surface alignments by Dr. Donnellan and an Italian team led by Dr. E. Farinetti (University of Roma Tre).

Restudy of the surface ceramics from additional sites, as long-term preparation for further Boeotia final volumes also took place this year. In particular Dr. K. Sarri, Project prehistorian, focussed in 2019 on the finds from the major rural site of Klimmataria, an extraordinary discovery we made in 1989 in the middle of the current Lake Hylike in Central Boeotia [Figure 3]. The exceptional dry year lowered lake levels beyond living memory to reveal a complex architectural plan of a village then fortified estate-centre from Bronze Age to Crusader times. The main patterning is due to a large tower-estate of the Crusader era, with parallels in excavated estate-centres in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, but Dr. Sarri found the prehistoric occupation to be one of the richest of any of our survey sites, with many ceramic forms unique to the village. Her analysis will continue into 2020.

Dr. H. Forbes (Nottingham University) has continue to conduct interviews and collect archival records relating to the recent history of the modern villages in our survey districts, as a complement to the recording of surface finds and of traditional architecture which we have already completed. One novel aspect to his work as ethnoarchaeologist is the comparison of

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village life in Boeotia at three distinct points of anthropological reports: the lifeways in the 1950’s by E. Friedl, by our own initial anthropology team of C. Slaughter and Ch. Kasimis in the late 1970s to early 1980s, and at the present time from his current observations. A secondary focus is the insightful comparison of the contrasting agendas and recording choices made by these different observers.

Figure 3: The Plan of the Lakeside settlement of Klimmataria in Lake Hylike, currently once more underwater (Lef Sigalos).

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ARTICLES


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REVIEWS

V. Aravantinos & E. Kountouri, edd., 100 Χρόνια Αρχαιολογικού Έργου στη Θήβα (451.1.01)

H. Beck, K. Buraslis & A. McAuley, edd., Ethnos and Koinon (491.1.01)


C. Bonnet, Les enfants de Cadmos (451.1.02)
492.53 M. Eckert, *Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer* (471.1.05)
- [r] A. Johnston, *BMCR* 2019.05.53.

492.54 M. Foster, *The Seer and the City* (481.1.05)

492.55 B. Lorenz, *Griechische Grabgedichte Thessaliens* (492.1.04)

492.56 L. Migeotte, *Économie et finances publiques des cités grecques II. Choix d’articles publiés de 2002 à 2014* (461.1.05)
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492.57 S. Nevin, *Military Leaders and Sacred Space in Classical Greek Warfare* (471.1.12)

492.58 S. Oikonomou, ed., *ἈΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΕΣ ΣΥΜΒΟΛΕΣ. Τόμος Γ: Βοιωτία & Εύβοια* (471.1.13)

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492.62 R. Waterfield, *Creators, Conquerors and Citizens* (492.1.08)

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ARTICLES


ARTICLES


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492.2.18  E. Alexiou, “Divisions in Greek culture: Cultural topoi in Plutarch’s biographical practice”, in: 492.2.03, p. 229-236.

492.2.19  E. Almagor, “Greatness measured in time and space: The Agesilaus–Pompey”, in: 492.2.03, p. 147-158.


492.2.23  M. Beck, “Time and space in Plutarch’s Lives”, in: 492.2.03, p. 25-40.

492.2.24  E. Berardi, “Modelli del passato in due conferenze di Plutarco: De gloria Atheniensium e De audiendo”, in: 492.2.03, p. 183-190.

492.2.25  F. E. Brenk, “Space, time, and language in On the Oracles of the Pythia: ‘3,000 years of history, never proved wrong’”, in: 492.2.03, p. 79-86.


A. Catanzaro, “Astronomical and political space: The sun’s course and the statesman’s power in Plutarch and Dio”, in: 492.2.03, p. 327-334.


P. Desideri, “Solon on the road”, in: 492.2.03, p. 175-182.


D. Driscoll, “Symptotic space, hierarchy and Homeric quotation in Table Talk”, in: 492.2.03, p. 271-278.


L. E. Fletcher, “Narrative time and space in Plutarch’s Life of Nicias”, in: 492.2.03, p. 67-76.

F. Frazier, “Espace mémoriel et paysage monumental”, in: 492.2.03, p. 43-54.


A. Georgiadou, “Introduction: Reading Plutarch through space, time and language”, in: 492.2.03, p. 1-12.


S. Jacobs, “Creating paradigms for the politikoi: Bridging the gap in political space and time with pre-imperial heroes”, in: 492.2.03, p. 137-146.


L. Kim, “Poetry, extravagance, and the invention of the ‘archaic’ in Plutarch’s Greek Questions”, in: 492.2.03, p. 87-98.


M. Lápka, “Individuated gods and sacred space in Plutarch”, in: 492.2.03, p. 299-306.


A. G. Nikolaidis, “Past and present in Plutarch’s Table Talk”, in: 492.2.03, p. 257-270.


492.2.82 C. Pelling, “Space travel and time travel in Plutarch”, in: 492.2.03, p. 15-24.


492.2.95 S. Xenophonos, “Military space and paideia in the Lives of Pyrrhus and Marius”, in: 492.2.03, p. 317-326.

REVIEWS

492.2.96 E. Almagor, Plutarch and the Persica (482.2.01)


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492.2.100 A. Brook, Tragic Rites. Narrative and Ritual in Sophoclean Drama (482.2.03)

492.2.101 A. Georgiadou & K. Oikonomopoulou, edd., Space, Time and Language in Plutarch (492.2.03)

492.2.102 K. Gervais, ed., intro., trans., comm., Statius, Thebaid 2 (472.2.01)

492.2.103 K. Glazer, Searching for Oedipus (491.2.04)
R. Hadas (trans.), *Euripides: the Iphigenia Plays. New Verse Translations* (492.2.04)

A. Hinds & M. Cuypers, *Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis: two versions of Euripides’ masterpiece* (472.2.02)

G. Hutchinson, *Plutarch’s Rhythmic Prose* (482.2.07)

A. Hinds & M. Cuypers, *Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis: two versions of Euripides’ masterpiece* (472.2.02)

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M. Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy. Volume 2, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides* (491.2.12)

G. Xenis, *Scholia vetera in Sophoclis Oedipum Coloneum* (481.2.23)

S. Xenophonitos, *Ethical education in Plutarch: moralising agents and contexts* (462.2.13)
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