

La défense du territoire: Étude de la “chôra” érétrienne et de ses fortifications

By Sylvian Fachard (Eretria 21). Pp. 358, figs. 241. École Suisse d'Archéologie en Grèce, Athens 2012. \$100. ISBN 978-2-88474-410-2 (paper).

This book presents the first archaeological and historical study devoted to the ancient fortifications of Eretria, but it is also a study of that city's territory in general. The book is divided into two parts: the first part (chs. 1–6) describes in detail the territory (*chora*) of Eretria (called “Eretriad”), and the second part (chs. 7–10) presents the analysis of the rural fortifications. The urban city walls of Eretria are not considered in this publication.

The main goal of the study is to understand why the Eretrians built defensive structures in their territory and, more generally, why some Greek city-states invested so heavily in fortifications within their own territories. The author challenges the interpretation that has become accepted since Ober's 1985 publication, *Fortress Attica: Defense of the Athenian Land Frontier 404–322 B.C.* (Leiden), which links the construction of rural fortifications with the need to protect the civilian population. In the introduction, Fachard proposes a broader approach for the study of the rural fortifications in the Greek world. After a description of the local geography (ch. 1) and a brief presentation of the political organization of the Eretrian territory (ch. 2), chapter 3 examines the Eretrian rural settlement pattern and proposes a repartition of the demes into five districts. In chapter 4, the author tries to define the boundaries of the territory of Eretria: borrowing methods derived from landscape archaeology, he delineates Eretria's borders on the ground. In chapter 5, the author inventories roads (the main one was between Chalkis and Karystos) and paths linking demes to isolated settlements before considering the population and the resources of the territory in chapter 6.

The author inventories 39 rural fortifications, 30 of which were occupied mostly in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Four types of walls are identified: fortified settlements, military forts and fortresses, isolated towers, and rubble enclosure walls. The author then presents a survey of the archaeological sites between Chalkis and Karystos: at a macrogeographical level, he inventories fortifications in relation to

the town (*asty*), the agricultural surface, the borders, and the road network; at a microgeographical level, he studies the distribution of the fortifications in the five districts and microregions. Fachard notes that most fortifications were not situated along the region's borders and thus did not control routes, but had been built in the interior of the *chora*. A significant part of this study attempts to define the factors that played a decisive role in the choice of these sites, which were not chosen initially for military or strategic considerations.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the first part of the study: after a recapitulation of the evolution of settlements, of the size of rural demes, and of the relationship between settlements and cultivable surfaces, this chapter tackles the issue of rural demography. The combined results of these inquiries show that rural fortifications were built and occupied at times when civilian occupation and agricultural exploitation peaked.

The second part of the study begins with a description and analysis of rural fortifications (ch. 7) in comparison with well-known Greek fortified sites and rural defensive works. Chapter 8 presents the catalogue of 39 different fortifications studied by the author (another catalogue, inventorying 183 archaeological sites between Chalkis and Marmari, is found at the end of the book [295–337]). The remains of each fortification are described, and a chronology of occupation based on ceramics is proposed; maps or sketches and photographs complement the descriptions. The sites are classified according to their functions: fortresses, fortified settlements and deme centers, rubble forts, and isolated towers; the two first categories seem to have been built from the fourth century B.C.E. onward.

Chapter 10 attempts to define the role of Eretria's rural fortifications and their relation to the polis, demes, and microregions. Most of the fortifications were built around settlements, as observed by Ober in Attica. They were built to protect the settlements and

the people working the land, although the author does not argue that they formed a “network” defending the territory of Eretria along its borders (as Ober has argued for Attica). The author suggests that their purpose was mainly an economic one: rural fortifications had a function of shelter for agricultural products as well as for the local population in case of invasion. Additionally, they could be used as small regional military centers from which counterattacks could be launched. Eretria’s *chora* was one of the largest territories, and people living far from the *asty* would have needed to protect their settlements too. It is for this reason that fortified settlements can be found at many places inside the *chora*, as much as 16 km from the *asty*. Most of these ancient fortified sites have been occupied once again by the Byzantines, the Franks, or the Venetians because of their defensive character.

Fauchard’s book is a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the organization of a civic territory

(despite perhaps too-short historical conclusions). His approach, critical of long-standing interpretations of the function of rural fortifications, complements other recent studies dealing with territorial fortifications and the problem of the defensive organization of cities. On this peculiar aspect on fortification studies, see Fachard’s introduction and the papers forthcoming from the fifth section (“The Fortification of Regions”) of the conference “Fokus Fortifikation: Conference on the Research of Fortifications in Antiquity,” held at the Danish Institute at Athens on 6–9 December 2012.

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