



ESAG

ÉCOLE SUISSE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE
EN GRÈCE
SCHWEIZERISCHE ARCHÄOLOGISCHE
SCHULE IN GRIECHENLAND

FIELDWORK OF THE SWISS SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2025

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The Eretria Amarynthos Survey Project (EASP)

SYLVIAN FACHARD AND ELENI S. BANOU, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DESPINA KOUTSOUMBA, FABIEN LANGENEGGER, JULIEN PFYFFER, CLAUDIO PACHECO MARTINS AND THIERRY THEURILLAT

Underwater Research in the Ancient Harbour of Eretria

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Aegina, Hellanion Oros: The 2025 Season

69. Jahrgang 2026
Herausgegeben von der Vereinigung
der Freunde antiker Kunst · Basel

ANTIKE KUNST

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR KLASSISCHE ARCHÄOLOGIE
REVUE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE CLASSIQUE
RIVISTA DI ARCHEOLOGIA CLASSICA

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Dieses Heft ist publiziert mit Unterstützung von:



Ceramica-Stiftung, Basel

Legat Helga Dittmers-Herdejürgen

Dr. Barbara L. Begelsbacher, Basel
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UBS Switzerland AG, Basel

Gestaltung und Bildbearbeitung:
Simone Hiltcher

Tafellayout:
Aleksandra Mistireki

Druck:
Schleunungsdruck GmbH, Marktheidenfeld
Printed in Germany
ISSN 0003-5688 (Print)
ISSN 2813-2858 (Online)
ISBN 978-3-9090-6469-4
DOI 10.53191/AntK.978-3-9090-6469-4
© i Inhalt unter CC-BY lizenziert

Wissenschaftliche Redaktion:

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Herausgeber, Verlag und Redaktion:

Vereinigung der Freunde antiker Kunst
c/o Universität Basel, Klassische Archäologie
Petersgraben 51, CH-4051 Basel
<http://www.antikekunst.org>
E-Mail: editor@antikekunst.ch
publisher@antikekunst.ch

Werbung und Vertrieb:

Schwabe Verlag
Schwabe Verlagsgruppe AG
St. Alban-Vorstadt 76, CH-4052 Basel
Tel. +41 (0) 61 278 95 65
<http://www.schwabe.ch>
E-Mail: info@schwabeverlag.ch

Herstellerinformation:
Schwabe Verlag, Schwabe Verlagsgruppe AG
St. Alban-Vorstadt 76, CH-4052 Basel
info@schwabeverlag.ch
Verantwortliche Person gem. Art. 16 GPSR:
Schwabe Verlag GmbH
Marienstrasse 28, D-10117 Berlin
info@schwabeverlag.de

The year 2025 marked the 50th anniversary of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece (ESAG). Public conferences in Athens and Lausanne served as occasions to revisit the School's history, present recent research, and outline new perspectives for the future of Swiss archaeology in Greece. Since its foundation, the ESAG has provided a supportive framework for Swiss professors, researchers, and students from across Switzerland. Standing as Switzerland's only permanent archaeological institution abroad, its role remains vital for conducting large-scale Swiss research and excavation projects in Greece¹.

Over the past year, the School carried on fieldwork and research activities. In Euboea, the survey between Eretria and Amarynthos completed the systematic study of the plain, laying the foundations for a new diachronic regional history. Meanwhile, research on the Temple of Artemis continues within an international collaboration in preparation for its forthcoming publication. In Eretria, a second field season on the ancient harbour facilities was conducted with the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities and the Octopus Foundation.

In Aegina, the Swiss-Greek team resumed excavations at the summit of Hellanion Oros and expanded the surrounding survey. The spectacular discoveries convinced us to submit a new, well-resourced five-year project. In Antikythera, Swiss-Greek archaeologists and divers completed the final campaign of the 2021–2025 five-year research program. While awaiting the scientific publication of the results, the exhibition “News from Antikythera” in Geneva invited the public to discover the

very latest and previously unpublished results that make this ship a true laboratory for the study of the ancient Mediterranean.

Finally, the Eretria Series was enriched in 2025 by a new volume (27) devoted to inscribed lead sheets from Styra, authored by Francesca Dell'Oro.

THE ERETRIA AMARYNTHOS SURVEY PROJECT (EASP)

Sylvian Fachard, Angeliki G. Simosi, Chloé Chezeaux

The 2025 season completed a five-year program of intensive archaeological field survey in the Eretria–Amarynthos plain². The project pursued three main, interrelated objectives: the systematic documentation of the region's archaeological record in the face of rapidly expanding urbanization; the reconstruction of the long-term history of human occupation; and the study of the emergence of the sanctuary of Artemis Amarysia at Amarynthos within the formative processes of the Eretrian polis³.

The Slopes of Mount Olympos

In the final season, the survey focused on the slopes of Mount Olympos (*fig. 1*) in order to complete the spatial coverage of the study area and to incorporate into our research agenda the ancient occupation and exploitation of mountainous environments – contexts traditionally neglected by survey archaeology in Greece. As expected, the exploration of the foothills of Mount Olympos, between Eretria and Gymnou, yielded few remains that can be directly attributed to human activity. Characterized by steep, erosion prone slopes and by the presence of substantial alluvial fans, this sector presented a highly constraining environment, poorly suited to the establishment of permanent settlements. Within this setting, only the previously known site of Prophitis Ilias, situated on

Antike Kunst 69, 2026, pp. 134–148 pl. 19

¹ We are especially grateful to the Greek Ministry of Culture and to the Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea. The activities of the Swiss School are supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), the University of Lausanne and the Canton of Vaud, Swiss universities, the Sandoz Family Philanthropic Foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Evangelos Pisticolis Foundation, the KIKPE Foundation, the Isaac Dreyfus-Bernheim Stiftung, the Ceramica-Stiftung, the Société Académique Vaudoise, and the Fondation Théodore Lagonico.

² The survey is co-directed by S. Fachard (ESAG – University of Lausanne) and A. G. Simosi (EAE), with the collaboration of C. Chezeaux (ESAG – University of Lausanne) and O. Kyriazi (EAE).

³ On the methods of the survey, see AntK 65, 2022, 133–134.



Fig. 1 Mount Olympos (Euboea)

a steep hill at the foot of the Olympian slopes, produced clear evidence of human occupation⁴. The site displays a dense concentration of obsidian and Late Neolithic pottery, complemented by a small number of Classical pottery, attesting to its recurrent use and sustained attraction over several millennia.

Despite the limited settlement evidence, the survey identified various forms of economic exploitation, thus revealing new insights regarding the significance of the mountain's slopes for the local population. First, the discovery of several quarries reveals the localized exploitation of limestone and marble lenses. Because limestone is scarcely available outside the Eretrian acropolis and the Kaki Skala Cape, the lower slopes of Mount Olympos would have provided accessible sources for the populations of the surrounding demes, notably the ancient settlements of Gymnou (ancient deme of Boudion) and Aghios Raphail (Dismaros?).

Among the archaeological features, we identified a rock-cut gallery to the north-west of Gymnou (*pl.* 19, 2)⁵. This sunken gallery is accessed via a ramp of 5 m in length and is flanked at its entrance by spoil heaps. The opening, oriented towards the south-east, measures *circa* 1.70 m in height and 1.90 m in width. Carved into the bedrock, the gallery curves towards the north-north-east before continuing on a gentle downward slope for approximately 8.50 m. Although these features attest to an ancient phase of iron exploitation, the lack of diagnostic

material prevents a secure chronological attribution at this stage.

Moreover, the mountainous slopes of Mount Olympos offered extensive surfaces suitable for herding and woodcutting. The vegetational landscape remains poorly understood at this stage of the study, but current observations – drawing on precipitation patterns and sedimentation processes – suggest that several areas may have been covered with pine forests, enabling woodcutting, resin collection (including pitch), and charcoal production. In addition, significant stretches of the mountain slopes were covered with maquis and low vegetation, thus providing vast areas for herding, which played a key role in the Eretrian economy.

In sum, far from representing an abandoned or marginal territory, the folds of Mount Olympos reveal a distinct dimension of human engagement with the landscape. The steep terrain, unsuitable for intensive agriculture or permanent habitation, was nonetheless exploited for herding, wood collecting, and the extraction of stone and mineral resources. The discreet archaeological signature of these activities also serves an important methodological purpose: it provides a baseline against which evidence from more densely occupied areas can be calibrated, thus helping to avoid a site-centred and potentially biased reading of the territory⁶. This contrast between intensively invested loci and more discreet spaces illuminates broader patterns of land use and contributes to a more balanced reconstruction of the regional landscape.

⁴ The site was discovered during the British survey conducted in the 1960s (Sackett *et al.* 1966, 64 no. 61).

⁵ We would like to thank J. Gravier for his work on metallurgical activities in the Eretrian territory, which led to the identification and analysis of this feature.

⁶ For such methodological considerations, see, for example, Cherry *et al.* 1991, 21. 34. 46–48.



Fig. 2 Archaeological survey at the summit of Mount Olympos

A Peak Sanctuary on the Summit of the Euboean Olympos?

The survey of Mount Olympos also targeted its ridges and summits in order to document possible features associated with activities such as surveillance (observation posts), burial, or cult⁷. At an altitude of over 1'000 m, on the summit plateau of Mount Olympos (fig. 2), we recorded an unusually dense concentration of pottery. Although the assemblage is predominantly composed of coarse wares, it also includes a significant proportion of fine, black-glazed pottery, suggesting a range of consumption-related practices. The material is highly fragmented and dispersed across a relatively restricted area of approximately 1'000 square m. Preliminary study indicates repeated episodes of deposition extending from the late Archaic period through the Roman period⁸. The extreme degree of fragmentation, however, prevents any further refinement of the chronology or the identification of distinct phases of activity.

The environmental constraints of the site further argue against any form of permanent or even temporary occupation. The absence of water, the poverty of the soil, and the difficulty of access render the establishment of a settlement or any form of agricultural exploitation at this location highly improbable. Instead, the concentration of

fine wares at the highest point of the Olympian massif (1138 m) is more plausibly explained by the presence of a peak sanctuary.

Such shrines are well attested in Attica, Boeotia, and Arcadia⁹, where peak cults constitute a widely documented phenomenon¹⁰. Owing to their elevation and visibility, mountains often formed privileged spaces of interaction between human communities and the divine¹¹. While such cultic contexts are frequently associated with Zeus, the situation on the Euboean Olympos appears more nuanced. The hypothesis of a high-altitude cult had already been advanced, primarily on the basis of a dedication to Artemis *Olympia* (IG XII 9, 260), yet it long lacked corroborating archaeological evidence¹². The surface material documented during the present survey therefore provides the first tangible indication of cultic activity at this location. Of course, the precise identification and character of the cult remain unknown, and answering these questions will require targeted investigation, which we hope to undertake in the near future.

⁹ Such summit cults are also attested in Euboea. Mount Kenaion is known solely through literary testimony (Hercules Oetaeus 99–103. 775–783). Elsewhere on the island, cultic activity has been suggested on the south-eastern slopes of the Karababa range in the southern part of Euboea (Keller 1985, 188–189), as well as on Mount Ochi (André – Chezeaux 2025 for a recent overview).

¹⁰ On this matter, see the doctoral dissertation of A. M. Belis, which presents a catalogue and offers a comprehensive, up-to-date bibliography on the topic (Belis 2015).

¹¹ In this regard, see especially Langdon 2000, 461.

¹² On this point, see Knoepfler 2026, 214–215. The hypothesis had already been advanced by Vischer 1857, 673 and Geyer 1903, 6. 58.

⁷ Several Late Neolithic–Early Bronze Age tumuli were previously discovered on the lower ridges of the massif (AntK 43, 2000, 133; AntK 45, 2002, 126). On the “sacred landscape”, see Fachard *et al.* 2026.

⁸ We would like to thank T. Saggini for conducting an initial assessment of the pottery assemblage and for proposing a preliminary dating of the material.

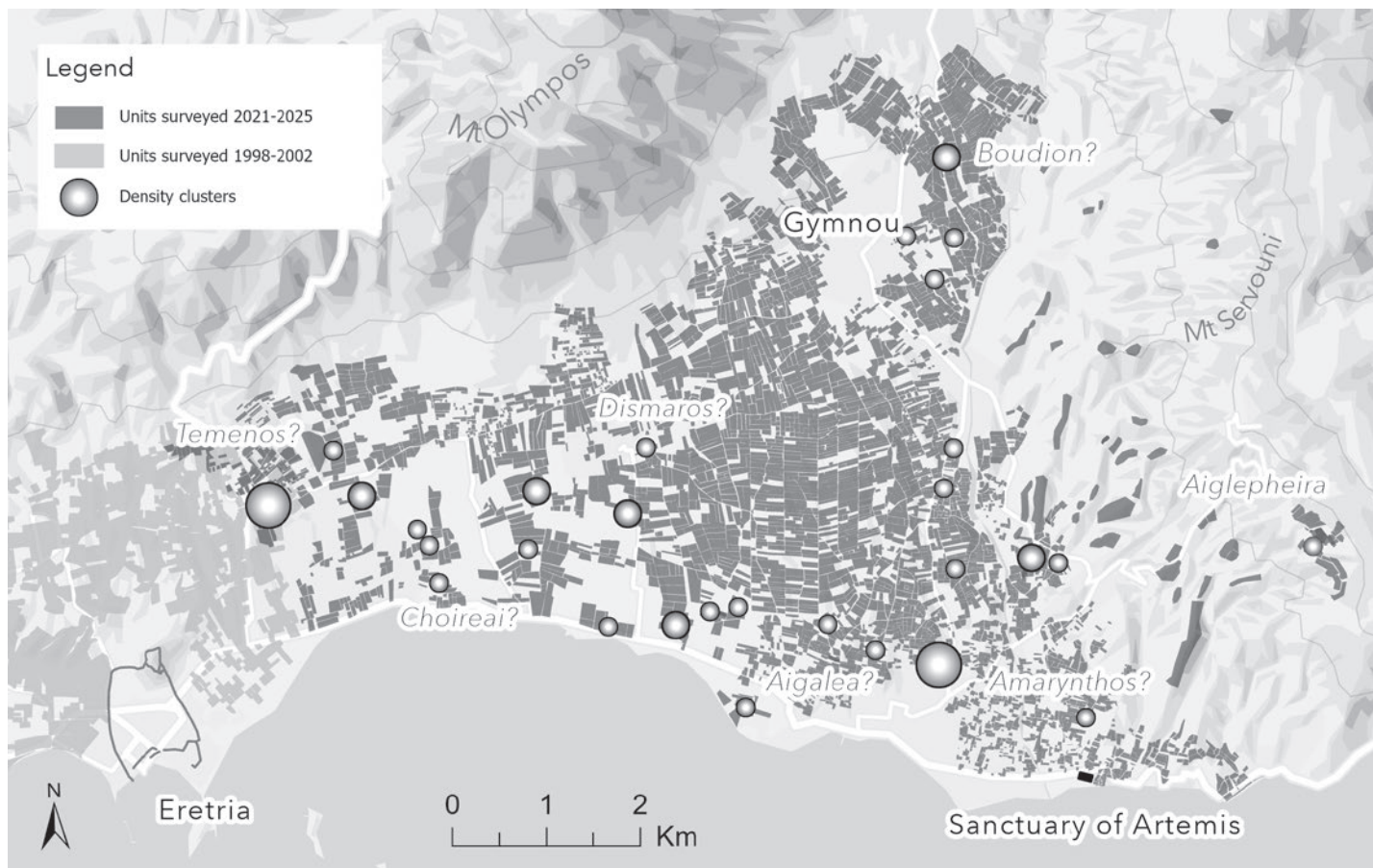


Fig. 3 Surveyed areas with sherd density clusters (2021–2025)

Landscape Reconstruction: a Preliminary Narrative

The five survey campaigns conducted between 2021 and 2025 have substantially enhanced our understanding of the plain extending between Eretria and Amarnthos (fig. 3). More than 20 square km were systematically surveyed using intensive pedestrian methods, and an additional 30 square km were examined through extensive survey techniques drawing on lidar and remote sensing. Together, these approaches have yielded a substantial body of evidence that now permits a preliminary reconstruction of the long-term dynamics of occupation in the region.

The existence of Late Neolithic sites was attested at Eretria, Amarnthos, as well as in the areas of Magoula and Gymnou¹³. EASP revealed the presence of lithics (obsidian, silex, chert) associated with coarse ceramics at 15 sites, attesting to the early establishment of communities within this fertile plain and the upper Sarandapotamos Valley. In most cases, the pottery is difficult to date, but

the gritty, poorly fired orange-brown fabric found at most sites can be tentatively dated to the Late Neolithic. For the Bronze Age, it should be emphasized that no diagnostic pottery assignable to a specific subperiod was recovered outside the Paleoekklissies Hill area at Amarnthos. It is also significant that the survey teams did not identify any Mycenaean sites between Amarnthos and Eretria. Overall, occupation appears to have been episodic and spatially dispersed outside these two hubs, which concentrate the bulk of activity in the region throughout the Bronze Age.

After the end of the Bronze Age, only Amarnthos seems to show evidence of continued occupation, as Eretria seems to have declined and possibly even been abandoned in the 11th and 10th centuries. Subsequently, both sites are occupied in the Geometric period, characterized by the meteoric rise of Eretria in the course of the 8th century. By contrast, evidence for rural habitation remains extremely limited, suggesting that the countryside was mainly exploited by labour forces residing in these two emerging poles.

¹³ See Sackett *et al.* 1966, 63–64; AntK 54, 2011, 144–159.

This picture appears to change only gradually over the course of the Archaic period, but it is not until the late 6th century that we observe a marked increase in archaeological indicators¹⁴. For the first time, several small rural settlements emerge outside Eretria and Amarynthos, indicating population growth and a more intensive exploitation of agricultural land¹⁵. The available evidence suggests a preference for locations close to the coastline and along major routes of movement, while the interior of the plain yields fewer and more tenuous traces. This pattern reflects an occupation focused on lowlying, fertile zones closely integrated with the urban centre of Eretria. Interestingly, the survey evidence corroborates the testimony of Herodotos, who mentions the existence of three settlements (*choria*) outside Eretria in the Late Archaic period¹⁶.

The peak of occupation was reached in the Classical period, as elsewhere in Greece. The distribution of pottery and tile indicates an intensively settled countryside, structured around two principal types of rural habitation. Nucleated settlements appear as compact, high-density concentrations of ceramics (pottery and tile) and architectural features, surrounded by zones of lower density, such as at Aglepharos (deme of Aiglepheira) and Aghios Raphail (Dismaros?). In other areas, the presence of non-nucleated settlements can be inferred from more diffuse and elongated spreads of ceramics extending over larger areas, probably along roads, as at Kotroni (Temenos?), Magoula (Choireiai), and Aghios Dimitrios-Tambaka (Aigalea). Such demes may be pictured as nonnucleated settlements, characterized by houses, farmsteads, shacks, gardens, and rubbish areas distributed across broader zones. In a few cases, isolated houses or farmsteads can be identified, though they appear to be rare or only faintly visible outside the larger density clusters. Overall, the combined analysis of ceramic densities, architectural features, and other surface remains suggests

the presence of 8–9 settlement cores, best interpreted as ancient demes (*demoi*)¹⁷.

The settlements were necessarily integrated into a wider network of roads and paths, although the ancient remains of these routes are poorly preserved. Only a small number of road segments were identified, sometimes in association with funerary monuments, and their layout corresponds closely to the routes reconstructed through heritage data, lidar-based remote sensing, and GIS-supported spatial analysis¹⁸. These itineraries appear to have linked the coastal zone with the upper Amarynthos Valley and to have facilitated movement across the mountain passes toward the core of the Eretrian territory, suggesting the existence of a structured network of circulation and exchange at a regional scale¹⁹.

The Hellenistic period saw a progressive yet notable decrease in occupation, both in density and in spatial extent. Settlements underwent significant contraction, and the archaeological signature of agricultural activity became increasingly sparse. This process reflects demographic decline and a shift of population toward the urban centre (Eretria), a pattern paralleled in other parts of Greece during the same period. The Imperial period, by contrast, witnesses a relative recovery, marked by the reoccupation of several settlement cores as well as the emergence of new sites.

The Byzantine period witnesses a profound paradigm shift, marked by the abandonment of Eretria as the principal regional urban centre. Settlement patterns shift eastward and reorganize around Amarynthos, extending onto the slopes of Mount Servouni, which become dotted with chapels, hilltop hamlets, towers, and small fountains. Olive terraces attributable to this period – still visible in places – attest to the intensive exploitation of the Servouni slopes and to the development of a durable agropastoral system. The proliferation of small chapels likely reflects the landholding interests and economic influence of the monastery of Aghios Nikolaos in the management of local resources. Exploitation thus moves

¹⁴ AntK 67, 2024, 103.

¹⁵ AntK 65, 2022, 134.

¹⁶ Hdt. Hist. 6, 108.

¹⁷ On the Eretrian demes, see Fachard 2012; Knoepfler 1997.

¹⁸ AntK 65, 2022, 135–136; Fachard *et al.* 2025, 39–41.

¹⁹ AntK 66, 2023, 98.

decisively towards the upland zone, which becomes a structured and productive landscape, complementary to the plain inhabited by the communities of Vatheia (Ano and Kato Vatheia), Mamoula, and Gymnou²⁰.

This diachronic narrative highlights the remarkable adaptability of the Eretrian landscape. Settlements shifted, expanded, or contracted in response to broader historical dynamics. The archaeological map produced over these five campaigns therefore goes far beyond a simple inventory of sites. It reconstructs a dynamic landscape shaped by settlement patterns, agricultural practices, economic exploitation, connectivity, and cultic activities that, from Prehistory through the Ottoman period, contributed to the long-term formation of the region's identity. The resulting archaeological map now constitutes a fully-fledged analytical tool, enabling detailed methodological and interpretive investigations that establish the Eretria–Amarynthos region as a particularly valuable case study for exploring the interplay between settlement, resources, and cult places in the Greek world.

UNDERWATER RESEARCH IN THE ANCIENT HARBOUR OF ERETRIA

Sylvian Fachard and Eleni S. Banou, with contributions from Despina Koutsoumba, Fabien Langenegger, Julien Pfyffer, Claudio Pacheco Martins and Thierry Theurillat

Since 2024, the harbour infrastructure of ancient Eretria has been the focus of a systematic research program conducted within the framework of the three-year Eretria Harbour Project – a collaboration between the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece (ESAG) and the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities, with the participation of the Octopus Foundation²¹. The 2025 summer campaign marked a new milestone for the Greek–Swiss team of archaeologists and divers, who pursued several objectives: to refine our understanding of the layout of a small basin adjoining the western maritime fortification;

²⁰ AntK 66, 2023, 98; AntK 67, 2024, 102–103.

²¹ AntK 68, 2025, 149–152.

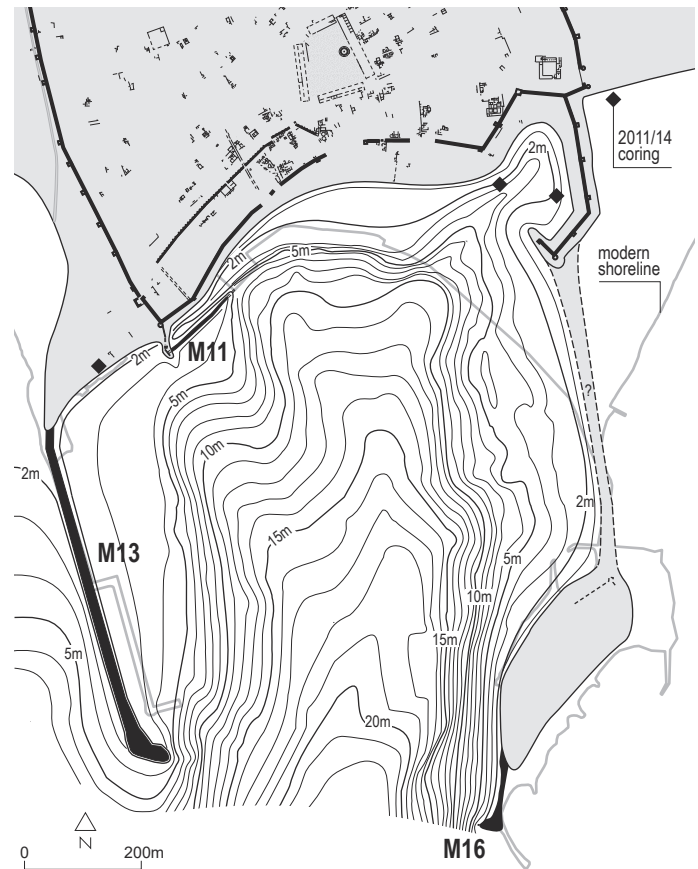


Fig. 4 Eretria, map of the harbour with reconstruction of the ancient coastline and bathymetry

to document the construction techniques of the large western breakwater and to locate its eastern counterpart; and to complete the bathymetric survey of the main harbour basin prior to extending the investigations further offshore in search of archaeological remains and submerged fossilized beaches (beachrocks).

The newly acquired data will enable a more precise reconstruction of the ancient coastal morphology and of the harbour installations erected by the Eretrians in the last centuries BCE (*fig. 4*). The campaign also had an important educational dimension: five students from Swiss and Greek universities were introduced to underwater archaeology through direct participation in dives and survey operations²².

²² The fieldwork took place September 1–13, 2025. The team included archaeologists D. Koutsoumba (EEA), F. Langenegger (ESAG-Laténium) and T. Theurillat (ESAG), professional divers A. Patsourou (EEA), J. Pfyffer, C. Georges, P. Henry, S. Rousseau, A. Guinand, M. Chalas (Octopus Foundation), as well as students C. Bihel (Univ. of Neuchâtel), C. Pacheco Martins, A. Thorez, L. von Flüe (Univ. of Lausanne), C. Kalliontzi (Univ. of Thessaly).

The Ancient Coastline

Landscapes are far from immutable, as they can go through substantial transformations over time. This is particularly evident along Mediterranean coastlines, where sea levels have risen by several meters over the past millennia. Fluvial sedimentation has progressively filled bays, while wave action has cemented shore deposits, forming beachrocks. These formations constitute valuable archives: the materials trapped within them – especially shells and ceramic fragments – can be dated, and their position provides key evidence for reconstructing past shoreline dynamics. Furthermore, deep cores drilled approximately a decade ago revealed that a marine bay extended well inland, reaching the foot of the acropolis, subsequently giving way to a lagoonal and marshy environment during the first millennium BCE.

The Main Harbour Basin and its Breakwaters

The first inhabitants of Eretria adapted to this continually shifting coastal environment and gradually reshaped it over the centuries. As early as the 7th century BCE, they diverted the river that regularly flooded the site, thereby draining the plain²³. Around 400 BCE, the city was enclosed within a fortified circuit more than 4 km in length. It was perhaps at this time that the Eretrians sought to protect the bay by constructing two large breakwaters²⁴, built directly upon the exposed beachrock formations, at a period when sea level stood approximately 2 m lower than today.

These breakwaters impressed 19th-century travellers, such as Alexandre Rangabé, who in 1852 marvelled at “the jetties, still visible beneath the waves, at a considerable distance from the shore”²⁵. While the western 600 m-long breakwater (M13) has been studied during the previous seasons, we located in 2025 the few

²³ Verdan *et al.* 2020.

²⁴ We prefer the term breakwater rather than mole, given the absence of evidence for a walkable surface, superstructure, or associated facilities.

²⁵ Rangabé 1853, 203.

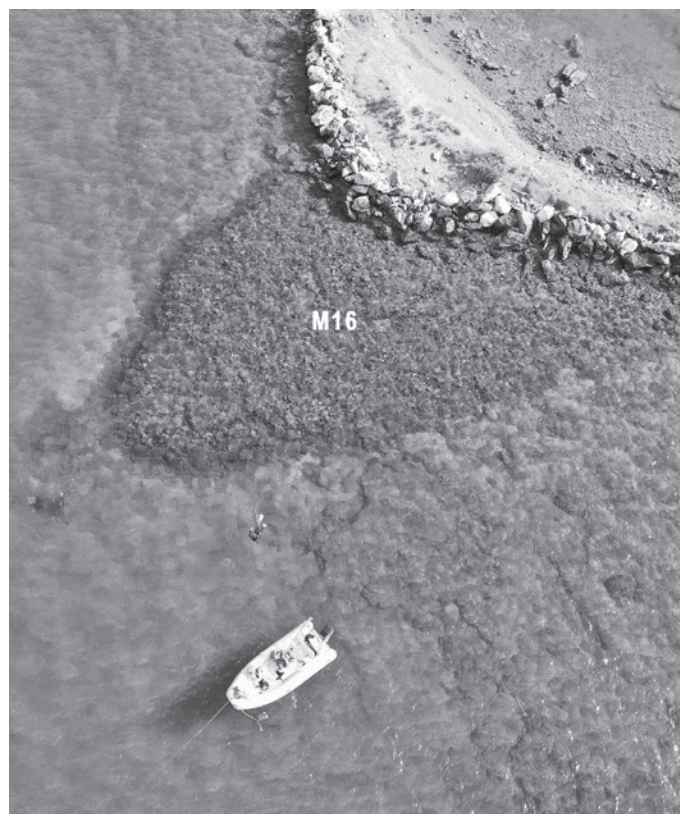


Fig. 5 Eretria, the eastern breakwater (M16) partly buried under modern earthworks

remaining traces of the eastern counterpart (M16, *fig. 5*), now partly buried under modern earthworks around Pezonisi Island²⁶. Both structures share identical construction techniques and plans: they consist of stacked blocks of varying sizes resting on cemented beachrock foundations. Their pierheads form inward-angled platforms that likely supported structures now too eroded to interpret.

The sheltered harbour area extended over more than 70 ha, offering safe anchorage for ships, though dominant winds still made docking hazardous. At least two inner basins were therefore built, allowing vessels of some tonnage to moor for loading or unloading or to be hauled ashore for maintenance. Unfortunately, silting and modern dredging have altered the seabed configuration since antiquity. To better understand the bay's topography and ancient navigation channels, the seabed was mapped using a sonar mounted on a remote-controlled boat. Coastal waters are generally shallow, but a central channel up to 8 m deep runs along the axis of the former “military” harbour, now silted up.

²⁶ First identified by Kampouroglou 1989, 93 *fig. 127*.

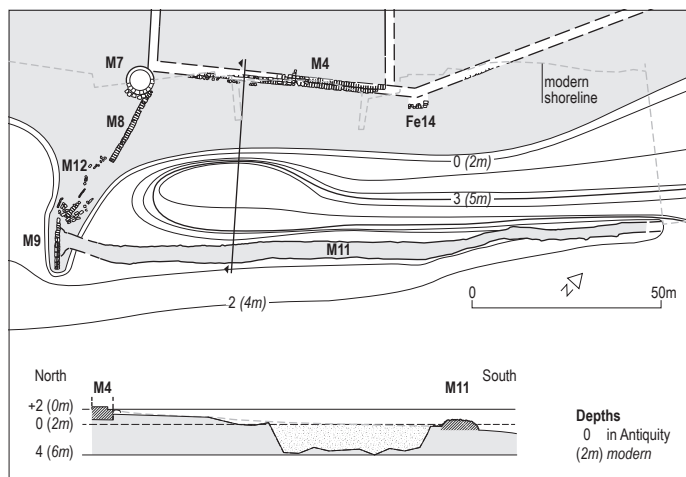


Fig. 6 Eretria, reconstruction and profile of the western Tower basin

The Western Tower Basin and the Eastern “Military” Harbour

In 2024, we identified and documented a small basin adjoining the western fortification wall (*pl.19, 1; fig. 6*)²⁷. A large ashlar wall (M8) extends about 20 m seawards from the tower before giving way to a disturbed zone strewn with large blocks (M12). Further south, a second section (M9), preserved in two courses of alternating large blocks, forms a solid jetty about 50 m from the shore. At its end, a structure of small stones piled on a base of large slabs creates a 5 m wide, 1 m high embankment. This mole runs perpendicular to the jetty for nearly 150 m, parallel to the shore, before disappearing under modern concrete. It shelters a basin of about 5'000 square m, now shallow, which was probed with a metal rod to assess sediment thickness. Measurements indicate heavy silting, up to 4 m at the centre, suggesting greater depth in antiquity. Planned trenches next season should clarify its layout.

We also cleaned a section of the maritime wall (M4) near the round tower, where a concentration of conglomerate blocks had been discovered in 2024. The latter appear to belong to a large quadrangular structure (Fe14), perhaps a quay or tower. Based on the other components recorded on the map of the ancient city, this area appears to be a strategic sector of the maritime fortification system, which will be more thoroughly studied in 2026.

The existence of a closed basin – or “military” harbour – at Eretria was hypothesized as early as the late 19th century by American archaeologists, intrigued by a section of the maritime wall enclosing a small pond to

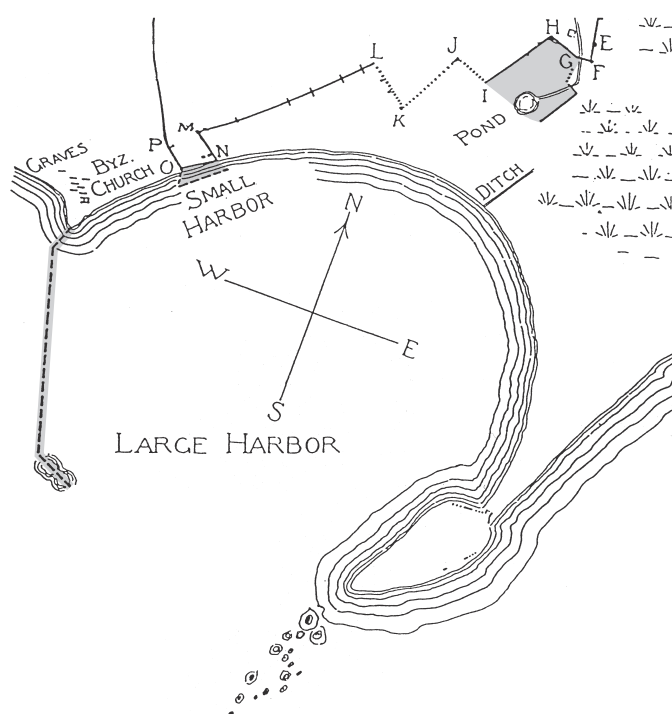


Fig. 7 Eretria, plan of harbour fortifications

the southeast (*fig. 7*). Recent analysis of geological cores from this spot confirms the presence, during the first millennium BCE, of a shallow bay suitable for light-draft vessels, at least until the early Roman period when it gradually silted up²⁸. It may have housed Eretria’s trireme fleet and their related ship sheds (*neosoiikoi*)²⁹. Now located in a residential district beneath a recently built church, the site deserves excavation, which could reveal naval installations and shed new light on the city’s maritime past.

The 2026 Campaign

These two seasons of cleaning and surveying have now reintegrated long-known but previously understudied remains into the city’s master plan. The next objective is to clarify the chronology and function of these structures. Targeted soundings planned for next summer should help resolve several outstanding uncertainties. It will also be essential to examine how the harbour installations interacted with the broader urban fabric and to reassess the maritime dynamism of Eretria – etymologically known as “the Rowing City”³⁰.

²⁸ Ghilardi *et al.* 2016, 160 fig. 6D.

²⁹ Ghilardi *et al.* 2016, 159–160; André 2020.

³⁰ Boffa 2012.

²⁷ AntK 68, 2025, 151–152.



Fig. 8 Hellanion Oros, site plan with the visible structures and excavated trenches

Tobias Krapf, Stella Chrysoulaki, Leonidas Vokotopoulos, Sophia Michalopoulou, Jérôme André

In 2025, a six-week fieldwork campaign took place on the peak and surroundings of Hellanion Oros, comprising two weeks of survey and four weeks of excavation³¹.

Excavation

Four different areas were investigated in 2025 (*fig. 8*). In the Late Mycenaean building on the northern slope³², the last vases were recovered next to the western wall 13 (trench 9, *pl. 19, 3*), including a dipper, a spouted basin, and a carinated kylix, as well as some small finds such as stone spindle whorls. In contrast to the southern and eastern sides of the room, the large storage vases along the west wall were placed on a low bench. The total number of complete or near-complete vases in this building exceeds thirty.

On the western slope, a trial trench (12) was opened in the area cleaned in 2024 immediately uphill of the Cyclopean wall, in one of the buildings shown on the topographic sketch published by Gabriel Welter in 1938³³. While the excavation of this trench is still at an initial stage, two important conclusions have already been reached. First, the area is covered with deposits originating from the area of the summit, which are either washed downslope, or have been intentionally redeposited: a layer with Geometric to Roman pottery, bones and

traces of fire, most probably related to the rituals in the sanctuary of Zeus as were the similar deposits on the northern slope, and, immediately underneath, a stratum containing Middle Helladic (MH) to early Late Helladic pottery, which potentially originates from an earlier phase of the sanctuary. Second, the interior face of the Cyclopean wall just appeared during the last days of the campaign at a distance of more than 2.2 m from its exterior face, proving that this is indeed a fortification, not a terrace or retaining wall. Specifically, its purpose was to defend the most accessible side of the peak. No new evidence relating to the buildings behind the wall has been gained so far, but a construction in late Mycenaean times still seems most probable, as already proposed by Adolf Furtwängler at the beginning of the 20th century³⁴.

On the southern slope, a large building complex outside the area drawn by G. Welter was mapped and partially cleared in 2025 (*fig. 9*). Walls had been observed amongst the tumble since the start of the project, but the exploration of this rather inaccessible area only started this year. Clearing of the fallen debris established that these walls, which were built with roughly hewn blocks that can exceed 1.5 m in length, including monumental orthostates, are preserved up to a height of 2 m. The walls formed series of approximately square rooms, extending on three or more levels. In terms of construction technique, these resemble the Mycenaean buildings at nearby Lazarides³⁵ and at Korphos Kalamianos³⁶ on the Corinthian shore of the Saronic Gulf. Almost all the pottery dates to the Mycenaean period; the few later pieces and tiles can easily be explained as fallen from higher up the slope. A small trench (13) of 1.2 by 3.2 m was opened in one of the rooms at the lower part of the complex. A floor deposit was revealed, which yielded Mycenaean ceramics such as a small amphora and a spouted basin, as well as a bronze knife. The absence of decorated pottery, however, makes it difficult to attribute a precise date within the Mycenaean period to this context. In the same room, several objects related to metallurgical activities

³¹ The project is a collaboration of the ESAG with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and Islands. The survey took place from the 25.08. to the 05.09.2025, with the participation of L. Mura and B. Fromentin (Univ. of Lausanne), L. Hennault (Univ. of Poitiers) and L. Pearl Martinis (Univ. of Heidelberg). The excavation took place immediately thereafter until the 03.10.2025, with the participation of A. Baiardi, T. Broder and N. Ruchti (Univ. of Lausanne), A. Hoffmeyer and N. Jost (Univ. of Neuchâtel) as well as M. Delacruz (Univ. of Oxford). The fieldwork was financed by the ESAG Foundation.

³² AntK 68, 2025, 152–157.

³³ AntK 65, 2022, 138 fig. 11.

³⁴ Furtwängler 1906, 472–473.

³⁵ Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2021.

³⁶ Tartaron *et al.* 2011.

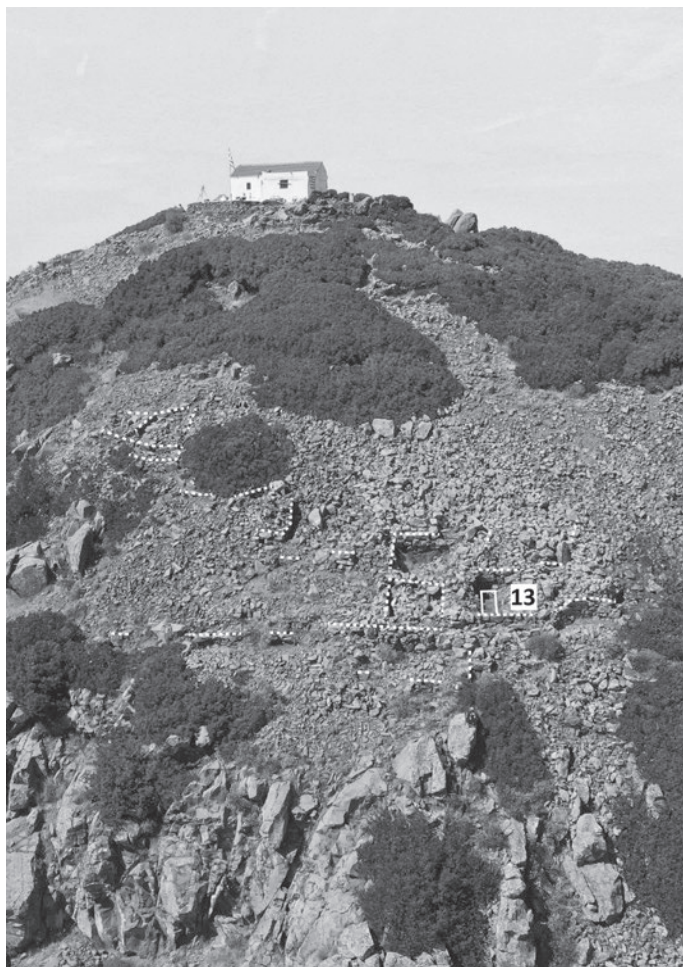


Fig. 9 Peak of Hellanion Oros, showing the large Mycenaean building complex and trench 13

were detected, including a crucible, a tuyère and slag. This recalls other metal finds and slag from the northern slope³⁷ and the Mycenaean metal hoard discovered at the beginning of the 20th century³⁸.

Finally, another trench (11) was opened southeast of the chapel, in one of the few spots close to the summit not covered by modern structures, with the aim of detecting levels related to the sanctuary of Zeus. Only the surface layer and one additional layer were encountered above the bedrock, in contrast to the adjacent trenches 1, 3 and 4 to the west, which had thicker deposits, including a MH layer. As part of the same work, the area around the retaining wall, which encircles the summit, was cleaned from vegetation for mapping. Further east, a deep hollow was uncovered between the protruding rocks, which was unfortunately used as a rubbish dump

during the last decades. In general, no new architectural remains of the sanctuary of Zeus were identified during the Swiss-Greek research, except for a number of Corinthian tiles that confirm the presence of a roofed building in antiquity. Hewn blocks from this structure are incorporated in the walls of the church, while two marble fragments previously documented by John McKesson Camp II³⁹ might have belonged to an altar.

Survey

Selected zones all around the Hellanion Oros have been covered by intensive survey in 2025 (*fig. 10*), both in new areas and in those visited during previous years for completing gaps. A total of 72 units were surveyed in a mostly very difficult terrain, yet all yielded pottery finds, two thirds tiles and half of them obsidian/flint materials, despite low ground visibility. In fact, 20'000 sherds were counted in 2025 alone. Pottery was most abundant near the villages of Vlachides and Sphentouri as well as on the Ano Vodi plateau. Above the cove of Aeginitissa, part of the Final Neolithic/Early Helladic I site discovered in 2024 was documented through gridded collection in 10 m squares. A considerable amount of pottery and lithic finds was collected, but no built structures were detected except for later terrace walls. Research in this area clearly needs to be continued. Further units around the multi-period site to the southeast of Vlachides, equally discovered in 2024, have been surveyed in 2025. The presence of MH pottery at this site is significant, since it adds to the finds of the same period from Hellanion Oros and Lazarides⁴⁰ and indicates clearly that southern Aegina was not only sporadically frequented and occupation did not concentrate solely at the fortified harbour town of Kolonna.

Two prehistoric fortified sites were visited in 2025, both situated at rocky outcrops towering over the southern coast of Aegina. One was newly identified to the south of Megali Koryphi, on a height of difficult

³⁷ AntK 66, 2023, 101.

³⁸ Gauss 2007, 130–133.

³⁹ Polinskaya 2013, 648 fig. 22.

⁴⁰ Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2021, 192–193.

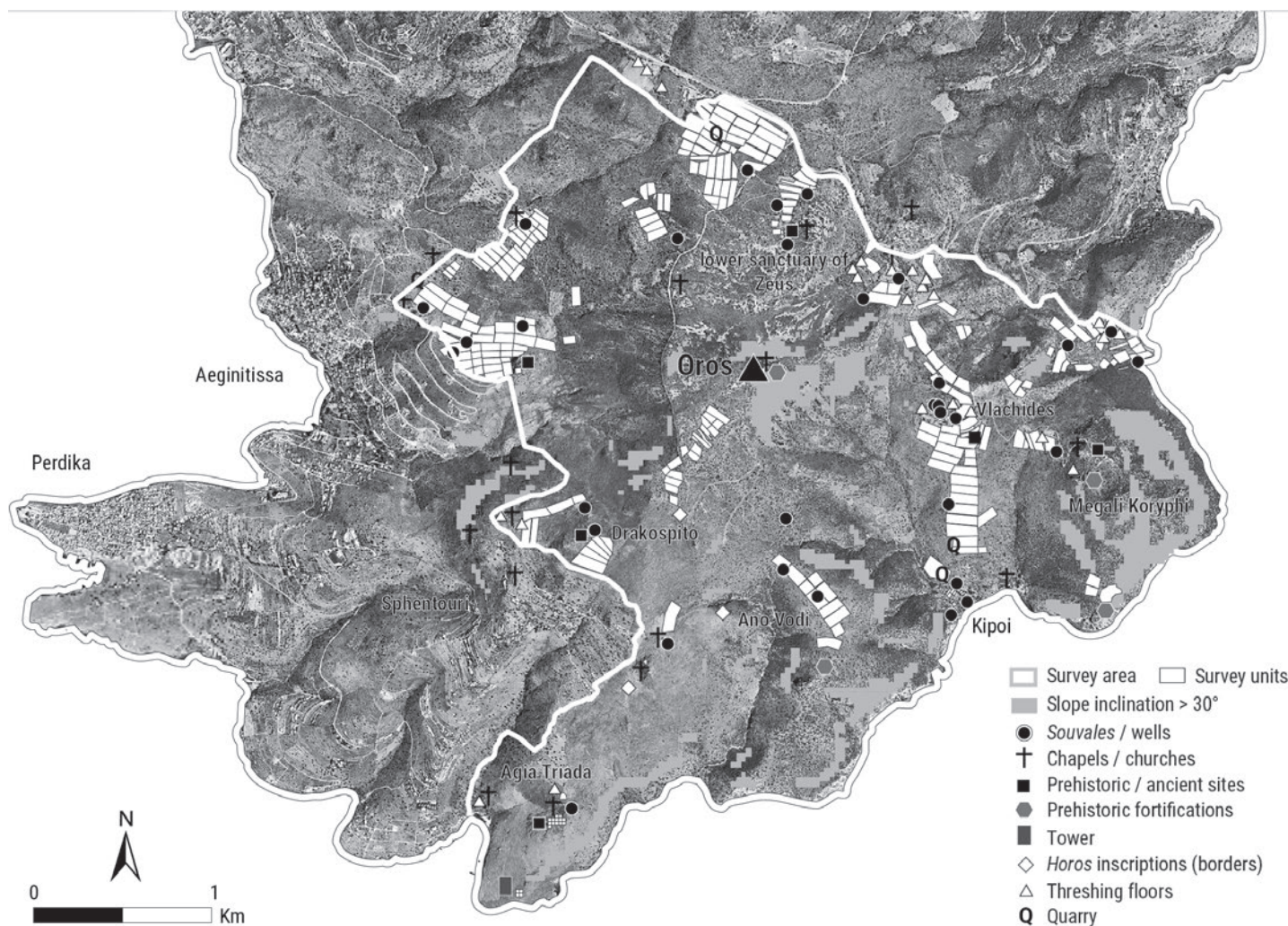


Fig. 10 Survey map of southern Aegina (2021–2025)



Fig. 11 Prehistoric fortification on the height that overlooks the bay of Kipoi

access above the bay of Kipoi (*fig. 11*), while the other is located at the south end of the Ano Vodi plateau. Much obsidian was found in the area of the abandoned hamlet just north of this site.

In total, a further forty structures have been identified around the Hellanion Oros in 2025, including wells, “souvales”, and quarry sites, attesting to the diachronic intensive use of the area.

Conclusions

With this campaign, a first five-year program of fieldwork has been completed (2021–2025). While the survey indicates that, throughout prehistory and the historic periods, the mountain peak site was by no means an isolated location but formed part of an intensively used landscape, significant new data about the activities on the

summit have been gathered as well, thanks to the excavation. It proved difficult to identify primary deposits related to the sanctuary of Zeus, but its remains are omnipresent in the form of deposits containing charcoal and burnt animal bones. The remains of the Mycenaean period, however, and especially those of the fortified refuge settlement, are often exceptionally well preserved, despite the exposed location and the extensive early excavations. Further research is needed in order to determine the character of the large building complex first explored in 2025 on the southern slope. The buildings of the sanctuary of Zeus must have suffered considerably from the later reoccupation of the site, again as a refuge settlement, and finally from the construction of the chapel on the summit. Nevertheless, a few areas still allow further exploration.

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GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

EAE	Ephorate of Antiquities of Euboea / Éphorie des Antiquités d'Eubée
ESAG	Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece / École suisse d'archéologie en Grèce
MH	Middle Helladic
SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation / Fonds national suisse

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Vischer 1857	W. Vischer, <i>Erinnerungen und Eindrücke aus Griechenland</i> (Basel 1857)	

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- 3 Aegina, Hellanion Oros. Detail of the bench along wall 13

ABKÜRZUNGEN

AA	Archäologischer Anzeiger, Beiblatt zu JdI	IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
AAA	Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν	IstForsch	Istanbuler Forschungen
ABV	J. D. Beazley, Attic Black-figure Vase-painters (1956)	IstMitt	Istanbuler Mitteilungen
ActaArch	Acta archaeologica (Kopenhagen)	JdI	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
Addenda ²	Beazley Addenda. Additional References to ABV, ARV ² & Paralipomena (Second Edition, compiled by T. H. Carpenter et al. at the Beazley Archive, 1989)	JHS	The Journal of Hellenic Studies
ADelt	Αρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον	JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
AEphem	Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς	JRS	The Journal of Roman Studies
AION	Annali dell'Istituto universitario orientale di Napoli, Dipartimento di studi del mondo classico e del Mediterraneo antico, Sezione di archeologia e storia antica	LCS	A. D. Trendall, The Red-figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily (1967), Suppl. 1 (1970) 2 (1973) 3 (1983)
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology	LIMC	Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae
AM	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung	MdI	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt	MEFRA	Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Antiquité
AntK	Antike Kunst (diese Zeitschrift)	MonAnt	Monumenti antichi pubblicati per cura della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei
AntPl	Antike Plastik	MonPiot	Fondation Eugène Piot. Monuments et mémoires
ArchCl	Archaeologia classica	NSc	Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei. Notizie degli scavi di antichità
ARV ²	J. D. Beazley, Attic Red-figure Vase-painters (² 1963)	NumAntCl	Numismatica e antichità classiche, Quaderni ticinesi
ASAtene	Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene	ÖJh	Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien
ASR	Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs	Paralipomena	J. D. Beazley, Paralipomena. Additions to Attic Black-figure Vase-painters and to Attic Red-figure Vase-painters (Second Edition) (1971)
BABesch	Bulletin Antieke Beschaving. Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology	Prakt	Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρίας
BAPD	Beazley Archive Pottery Database (< https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/carc/pottery >)	RA	Revue archéologique
BCH	Bulletin de correspondance hellénique	RE	Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
BICS	Bulletin. Institute of Classical Studies, University of London	RendPontAcc	Rendiconti. Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia
BMC	A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum	RM	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung
BSA	The Annual of the British School at Athens	RVAp I-II	A. D. Trendall – A. Cambitoglou, The Red-figured Vases of Apulia I (1978) II (1982), Suppl. 1 (1983) 2 (1991/92)
BSR	Papers of the British School at Rome	RVP	A. D. Trendall, The Red-figured Vases of Paestum (1987)
BWPr	Winckelmannsprogramm der Archäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin	SEG	Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum
CAT	C. W. Clairmont, Classical Attic Tombstones (1993)	SIMA	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum	SNG	Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum
CorVP	D. A. Amyx, Corinthian Vase-Painting of the Archaic Period (1988)	StEtr	Studi etruschi
CVA	Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum	StudMisc	Studi miscellanei
EAA	Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica, Classica e Orientale	ThesCRA	Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum
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ISSN 0003-5688 (Print)
ISSN 2813-2858 (Online)
ISBN 978-3-9090-6469-4