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# Opuscula

Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome

14  
2021

STOCKHOLM

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Published with the aid of a grant from The Swedish Research Council (2020-01217)  
The English text was revised by Rebecca Montague, Hindon, Salisbury, UK

*Opuscula* is a peer reviewed journal. Contributions to *Opuscula* should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee before 1 November every year. Contributors are requested to include an abstract summarizing the main points and principal conclusions of their article. For style of references to be adopted, see <http://ecsi.se>. Books for review should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee.

ISSN 2000-0898

ISBN 978-91-977799-3-7

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Printed by PrintBest (Viljandi, Estonia) via Italgraf Media AB (Stockholm, Sweden) 2021

Cover illustrations from Leander Touati *et al.* in this volume, p. 191

# An ancient cityscape and its people

## A study of ancient Hermione

Introductory remarks on historical sources and visible remains, archaeological research and prospects

### Abstract

This article provides a brief introduction to the area of the Hermionid and the research that has been carried out in ancient Hermione. The main textual sources are presented, as are the still-visible archaeological remains and the results of important rescue excavations. The contribution outlines the scientific framework of the project that has generated the five articles that follow, and closes with an agenda for future development for the exploration and preservation of ancient Hermione.

*Keywords:* Hermione, Hermionid, Southern Argolid, Excavations in Hermione, Bisti promontory, Warrior Tomb

<https://doi.org/10.30549/opathrom-14-05>

## Introduction. A Greek cityscape and its people, 2015–2017

The project *A Greek cityscape and its people—A study of Ancient Hermione* was initiated in 2014. The then 4th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (Argolis) proposed to the Swedish Institute at Athens to conduct a joint study of ancient Hermione. The Institute gladly accepted the invitation, and with the permission of the Greek Ministry of Culture, the project ran between 2015–2017, as a formal *synergasia* (collaboration) between the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Argolid and the Swedish Institute at Athens. The five case studies that follow this introduction present results from this first phase of the project, now continued within the framework of

a second chapter: *Hermione—A model city?*, expected to run for five years until 2023.

The initial collaborative study *A Greek cityscape and its people* had a twofold aim. Firstly, a better understanding of the fabric of social life in a Greek *polis* in a long-term perspective (Archaic to Imperial times) was sought: an exploration conducted through an integrated study of the built environments, traces of social structures (through for example prosopography and demography), and the religious beliefs and behaviour of Hermione's inhabitants. For this purpose, all sources available were used, archaeological as well as literary and epigraphical, and traditional excavation (in the necropolis) was combined with digital archaeology. One major result of this combination model was a three-dimensional geographical information system resulting in a topographical model where all identified visible material remains were placed, something which led to a new way of approaching the ancient city, providing a visual overview hitherto impossible. On a different level, the model was also a result of the second aim of the project, namely the development and refinement of digital tools and approaches for archaeology. The disparate nature of the remains of the ancient *polis*, both in type and distribution, challenged both traditional methods and new technologies. The project encompassed remains of great diversity, ranging from coins and statue bases to aqueducts, from cemeteries to city walls. These features were furthermore dispersed over a large area with partly difficult terrain and, during some seasons, thick vegetation. The fact that most of the ancient site of Hermione is overbuilt by dense modern habitation resulted in limited access, obscured sightlines, and obstructed satellite signals. Experimentation to overcome such obstacles provided highly valuable methodological input and heightened the sophistication of the existing techniques through a flexible documentation methodology, consisting of a combination of surveying techniques such as GPS, total station, laser scanning and image-based modelling (including photogrammetry from

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*Editorial note:* The section on Hermione, published in *OpAthRom* 14, comprises six articles: this contribution by Alcestis Papadimitriou; Gerding 2021; Blid 2021; Klingborg 2021; Kossyva 2021; Wallensten 2021. This article was translated from Greek to English by Katerina Gabierakis and Jenny Wallensten.



*Fig. 1. The Hermione necropolis, 2016, with Burial Enclosures A, B, Γ, Δ, E, ΣΤ, and Ζ. Recent excavations in Burial Enclosures Δ and ΣΤ are presented below in Kossyva 2021. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.*

remote-controlled drones and supplemented by digitized cartographic material and existing digital elevation data).<sup>1</sup>

The following contributions are among the first results of the three-year programme. The five case studies that follow are connected to the three themes set out to be explored: built environments, social structures, and the local religion. The first article, ‘The topography of Hermione—A preliminary outline’ by Henrik Gerding aims at further understanding of the topography of Hermione with a focus on the city walls. In the second contribution, ‘The Temple of Demeter Chthonia at Hermione’, Jesper Blid approaches the built environment through the publication, and proposed reconstruction of,

the Temple of Demeter Chthonia, main deity of Hermione. A third study by Patrik Klingborg then moves out to the Bisti promontory, presenting a survey of the still-visible cisterns in this location (‘The cisterns of the Bisti promontory at Hermione. With a preliminary description of the Roman aqueduct’). The contribution not only adds to our knowledge of Hermione’s architecture but also looks towards her demography, as it considers the water management and needs of the resident families. The fourth article likewise approaches the population of Hermione, through Angeliki Kossyva’s presentation of graves excavated during campaigns in the 1990s and in 2016 (*Fig. 1*): ‘Life and death in ancient Hermione. Excavations in the necropolis.’ The fifth contribution, ‘The key to Hermione? Notes on an inscribed monument’ by Jenny Wallensten, provides observations of the local religious landscape

<sup>1</sup> Methodology and first results are now published: Landeschi *et al.* 2020.



Fig. 2. The larger Hermionid area. Map by Patrik Klingborg, basemap by Google, ©Terra Metrics, Map data 2021.

via the discussion of an inscribed stone monument. It is our hope that the collection of articles will introduce new threads in the intricate weave that was the glimmering fabric of social life in ancient Hermione.

## The geographical position of Hermione

The Hermione peninsula, or the Hermionid, corresponds to the south-eastern tip of the region of Argolis (Fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> It is delimited to the north by Mount Didymon and the two Aderes-Mountains, which together form an almost insurmountable natural border to the contiguous areas of Epidauria and Troizinia, and the coastline is surrounded by the Argolic and Hydra Gulfs. This geography seems to have determined the historical development of the area in antiquity.

Scattered ancient remains are found throughout the peninsula, among which are three major archaeological sites: Franchthi Cave, and the ancient cities of Hermione and Halieis.<sup>3</sup>

Today, on the site of ancient Hermione lies the modern homonymous town of Ermioni, a most picturesque seaport on the eastern coast of the Hermionid (Fig. 3). The town extends along an approximately east–west orientated peninsula jutting into the homonymous bay, and smoothly ascends to the north-

west to what is currently known as the Hill of the Mills, known in antiquity as Pron Hill (Gerding 2021, fig. 1). Ancient literary sources, together with the remains still visible in and around Ermioni and excavated archaeological finds help us piece together the history of the ancient *polis* of Hermione.<sup>4</sup>

## Historical sources

Hermione is mentioned in Homer as one of the cities under Diomedes' leadership, together with Argos, Tiryns, Asine, Troizen, Eiones, Epidauros, Aigina, and Mases.<sup>5</sup> Regarding their earliest origins, Aristotle thought that the most ancient inhabitants of Hermione must have been Carians, who were pirates and purple shell fishermen,<sup>6</sup> while Herodotus and Strabo considered the Hermionians to be Dryopians who had been driven out from Doris (Strabo specifies an area near Parnassos).<sup>7</sup> Strabo furthermore mentions that Hermione was one of seven member cities that made up the Amphictyonic League based at the Sanctuary of Poseidon in Kalaureia (today's Poros).<sup>8</sup> The historical sources also give additional details about the territory of the Hermionians: during the 7th and the

<sup>4</sup> Jameson *et al.* 1994, 57–148.

<sup>5</sup> Hom. *Il.* 2.560.

<sup>6</sup> Strab. 8.6.15; Arist. frg. 491.

<sup>7</sup> Hdt. 8.43.1, 8.73.2; Strab. 6.14.

<sup>8</sup> Strab. 8.6.14.

<sup>2</sup> The modern name of the municipality is Ermionida.

<sup>3</sup> Papadimitriou 2012.



Fig. 3. The Hermione peninsula.  
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6th centuries BC, Hydra and Spetses also belonged to the city but in 525/524 BC, the island of Hydra was sold to a band of Samians who had been expelled by Polykrates.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the historical sources show the strength of Hermione in the 5th century BC. Herodotus tells us that Hermione fought with the Greeks during the Persian Wars: they sent three ships to the naval Battle of Salamis (480 BC) and 300 men to the Battle of Plataea (479 BC).<sup>10</sup> Later in the Classical period, in 465 BC, they ceded land close to the modern town of Porto Heli to a group of exiled Tirynthians, who then founded the city of Halieis.<sup>11</sup> As a member of the Peloponnesian League during the Peloponnesian War, Hermione was attacked and its rural surroundings laid waste by the Athenians in 430 BC.<sup>12</sup> The city however maintained its urban status and prosperity throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods, despite suffering catastrophic pirate raids.<sup>13</sup> Scattered sources let us know that the Hermionians argued over territory with neighbouring Epidauros, received grain from Cyrene, and were famous for purple production.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Hdt. 3.8.59.

<sup>10</sup> Hdt. 8.43.1, 9.28.4.

<sup>11</sup> Frickenhaus 1912, 112.

<sup>12</sup> Thuc. 2.56.5.

<sup>13</sup> Plut. *Vit. Pomp.* 24.5.

<sup>14</sup> Grain: Osborne & Rhodes 2003, no. 96. Territory: Ager 1996, 170–173, no. 63. Purple: Plut. *Alex.* 36.1–3; Alciphron, *Letters* 3.10; Protopoulos & Gatsos 2003. For the economy of Hermione, see further Bresson 2016, 361–364.

The richest testimony about Hermione is undoubtedly provided by the traveller Pausanias, who visited the city in the 2nd century AD. The description of the city follows a reference to the island of Hydrea (today's Hydra). A crescent-shaped beach can easily be identified with today's Kapari Bay, while what in the following is referred to as ακτή is the Hermione peninsula itself. The peninsula juts out eastwards from the mainland and has a length of seven stades and a maximum breadth of three. Pausanias locates the old city of the Hermionians in this area, in which there are still many sanctuaries. Here he locates a sanctuary of Poseidon at “the end of the spit”, a necropolis of Athena further inland and near it the foundations of a stadium. Pausanias also sees a smaller sanctuary of Athena, the roof of which has fallen in, as well as other temples dedicated to Helios, the Graces, Sarapis, and Isis; finally, he mentions enclosures for secret ceremonies dedicated to Demeter.<sup>15</sup>

The “new” Hermione of Pausanias' times is located to the west and is just about four stades (about 750 m) distant from the headland where he identified the Sanctuary of Poseidon. It lies on a site which is level at first and then continues up the slopes, to the small Pron Hill. Inside the city, without giving precise locations but apparently going from east to west, he mentions two temples to Aphrodite, a sanctuary of Demeter Thermasia (Warmth), a temple to Dionysus Melanaigis (of the Black Goatskin), a sanctuary of Artemis surnamed Iphigenia, a bronze statue of Poseidon, a sanctuary of Hestia, three temples of Apollo, and the youngest of them all, a sanctuary of

<sup>15</sup> Paus. 2.34.9–10.

Tyche. Pausanias also mentions two fountains, an ancient one that never runs dry and one of his time, in which the water comes from the area of Leimon. Furthermore he notes that the whole city is surrounded by a wall.<sup>16</sup>

According to Pausanias the most remarkable landmark is the Sanctuary of Demeter Chthonia. He locates the precinct of the goddess on Pron Hill, however without specifying whether it is inside or outside the city wall that he has just mentioned. He devotes an extensive description to the sanctuary and not least to the annual festival that takes place there in the summer, describing the festive procession and the sacrifice of four cows killed by old women inside the Temple of Demeter Chthonia. He also identifies other buildings in the sanctuary: opposite that of Demeter Chthonia is a temple of Klymenos, and beside it one of Ares, while to the right of the Sanctuary of Demeter Chthonia is a portico, called the Portico of Echo. Behind the temple he sees three stone-built enclosures, of Klymenos again, of Plouton, and of the so-called Acherusian Lake; Pausanias believes that the first enclosure was the location of an entrance to Hades, through which Herakles brought Cerberus to the upper world. Lastly, near the city gate of the road to Mases, but within the walls, he identifies a sanctuary of Eileithyia.<sup>17</sup>

During the Early Byzantine period (4th–7th centuries AD) the Hermionid is again a prosperous region (see below for the archaeological evidence), while later it was successively conquered by Franks, Venetians, and Ottomans. The tip of the peninsula was again fortified during medieval times; the first modern name of the town was Kastri.<sup>18</sup>

## Today's visible monuments

Remains of certain monuments of Hermione have remained visible through the centuries, and a modern visitor will at times stand before the monuments vividly described by Pausanias. Under the huge pines of the centre of the Bisti promontory lies the foundation of a Doric peripteral temple of the early Classical times (*Blid 2021, fig. 11; Gerding 2021, fig. 3.2, 4*). As mentioned above, Pausanias' account presents two possible candidates to be identified with this monumental building, a temple of Poseidon and a temple of Athena;<sup>19</sup> the question of



*Fig. 4. Ancient wall located under the old community centre, suggested to constitute the remains of the Portico of Echo mentioned by Pausanias. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.*

its identity remains open even today.<sup>20</sup> Traces of the ancient port were visible at the beginning of the century at the site of the central pier, as well as remnants of the central fountain of the city just south of it. The Roman aqueduct (*Klingborg 2021, figs. 2a–e*), which survives to a great length on the northern slope of Pron Hill, must have ended there, going in the direction to the city.<sup>21</sup> On the hill, under the Taxiarches Church (Aghioi Taxiarches), the foundations of the Temple of Demeter Chthonia are still visible (*Blid 2021, figs. 2, 5–9; Gerding 2021, fig. 3.20*),<sup>22</sup> while a huge retaining wall a little further north, below the old community centre, has been identified with the Portico of Echo (*Fig. 4; Gerding 2021, fig. 3.23*).<sup>23</sup> Parts of the wall, mentioned by Pausanias as surrounding the city, are preserved, and its gate is located almost at the entrance of today's Ermioni (*Fig. 5; Gerding 2021, fig. 3.15*).<sup>24</sup>

## The archaeological campaigns

### FROM THE BISTI TO THE NECROPOLIS

In the beginning of the 20th century Hermione was visited both by travellers and, unfortunately, smugglers of illegally excavated archaeological artefacts.<sup>25</sup> However, the early 1900s

<sup>16</sup> Paus. 2.34.11–12, 2.35.1–3.

<sup>17</sup> Paus. 2.35.4–11.

<sup>18</sup> [http://ecastles.culture.gr/mobilecontent/-/asset\\_publisher/XH-dEYy6aof01/content/ermio-1](http://ecastles.culture.gr/mobilecontent/-/asset_publisher/XH-dEYy6aof01/content/ermio-1); Benakis 2012; Isaías 2005; Panaiotopoulos 1987; Bon 1969; Sfikopoulos 1968, 111–112. See further Gerding 2021 in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Paus. 2.34.9–10: “one of Poseidon at the east end of the spit, and a temple of Athena further inland”, Jones 1918.

<sup>20</sup> Whereas Philadelphus opted for Athena, early travellers, as well as Michael and Virginia Jameson in 1950, identified it as a temple of Poseidon. In 1969, McAllister chose not to name the divine owner but stated that the location was suitable for a temple of Poseidon: Philadelphus 1909, 172–181; Leake 1846, 281; Jameson & Jameson 1950; McAllister 1969, 184. See further Gerding 2021 in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> See Klingborg 2021 in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> Paus. 2.35.4–10. See above and Blid 2021 in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> Paus. 8.35.10; Frickenhaus & Müller 1911, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Paus. 2.34.11, 2.35.11.

<sup>25</sup> See further Gerding 2021 in this volume.



Fig. 5. Remains of the city wall.  
Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

also saw archaeologist Alexandros Philadelphus initiating scientific explorations of the ancient city and its surroundings.<sup>26</sup> As a representative of the Greek Archaeological Society, he arrived in Hermione in mid-June 1908 and started excavating a few days later on the Bisti promontory. His research in the area around the Church of Hagios Nikolaos focused on the part of the medieval wall (the so-called “Venetian Wall”) that crossed the neck of the promontory and which had been built with important ancient material such as statue bases, marble votive stelai, inscriptions, columns, and a plethora of other ancient architectural members (*Gerding 2021, fig. 3.3*).<sup>27</sup> He proceeded to excavate the general area of the eastern end of the promontory, where he identified remains of ancient walls and buildings, as well as pottery, the majority of which he dated to the “good times” and pointed out the complete absence of Mycenaean ceramics. Lastly, he cleaned the foundations and the stereobate of the large temple at the highest point of the promontory (*Gerding 2021, fig. 3.2*). Despite the earlier travellers’ and geographers’ view identifying it with Pausanias’ Temple of Poseidon, Philadelphus argued that it should be attributed to Athena. The preservation of a part of an arch on its *euthynteria*, as well as several architectural members, moreover led him to the conclusion that the temple had been converted to a Christian church during the Byzantine era. By the end of July, he shifted the geographical focus of his research to the north of Pron Hill. It was already known that parts

of the city’s ancient cemetery was to be found in that location, since, unfortunately, it had already been discovered and looted by antiquities smugglers. He could establish that the cemetery extended to a length of about 1 km and included, in addition to the northern rocky slope of the Pron, most of the plain below it (*Kossyva 2021, fig. 1*). The tombs on the slope had been cut in the rocky ground and were mostly looted, but further below, by the public road and to the north of it, he found and excavated many graves that had escaped plunder, many of which contained rich offerings such as dolls, decorated mirrors, strigils, and ceramic vessels.<sup>28</sup> After a detailed description of the typology of the tombs, he concluded that they did not antedate the 5th century BC, and were mainly datable to Macedonian and Roman times.<sup>29</sup> Philadelphus’ archaeological survey lasted about a month and was ended when he believed further exploration would be in vain.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Philadelphus 1909, 180: “ιδίως θαυμαστάς πλαγγόνας, πλείστα κάτοπτρα ἀπλά και ἐν μετὰ σπανίας διακοσμῆσεως, ἑκατοντάδας δ’ ὄλας στλεγγίδων και ἀγγείων, τῶν πλείστων ἀνευ γραφικῶν παραστάσεων κομψῶν ὄμως και περτέχνων.” (“Particularly admirable dolls, many mirrors both simple and with rare decoration, hundreds of strigils and vessels, most of them without painted representations but elegant and elaborate.”)

<sup>29</sup> Philadelphus 1909, 181.

<sup>30</sup> Philadelphus 1909, 182: “εἰδομενότι ἐπὶ ματαίῳ ἀπέβαινε πᾶσα περαιτέρω σκαφή και ὅτι ἐξηγνηθήη πᾶσα ἢ ἐκεῖ ἀρχαιολογική ἔρευνα.” (“We saw that any further excavation was in vain and that all archaeological investigation was fulfilled there.”)

<sup>26</sup> Philadelphus 1909, 172–184; Frickenhaus & Müller 1911, 35–38.

<sup>27</sup> [http://ecastles.culture.gr/mobilecontent/-/asset\\_publisher/XH-dEYy6aof01/content/ermio-1](http://ecastles.culture.gr/mobilecontent/-/asset_publisher/XH-dEYy6aof01/content/ermio-1).



Fig. 6. The discovery of the Roman funerary monument. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.



Fig. 7. The upper part of the Roman funerary monument. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

### THE HERMIONE MOSAICS

Archaeological excavations in Hermione reassumed after about half a century, when as luck would have it, remnants of a mosaic floor with an inscription came to light in the yard of the primary school: “Ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου ἐπισκόπου ἡμῶν Ἐπιφανίου ἀνενεώθη τὸ ἔργον” (Gerding 2021, fig. 3.1).<sup>31</sup> The Greek Archaeological Society again sent a representative to Hermione, the architect Efstathios Stikas, who carried out excavations during the summers of 1955 and 1956. His campaigns revealed part of a large episcopal complex, in which a large three-aisled basilica with a narthex and atrium was prominent.<sup>32</sup> Stikas dated the mosaic floors to the 6th century AD, however, further studies show that the earliest floors conceivably date from the end of the 4th century AD.<sup>33</sup> Based on Roman inscriptions found at the site, Stikas assumed that the basilica was founded on top of an ancient sanctuary of Eileithyia.<sup>34</sup>

During his stay in Hermione, Stikas also engaged in the search for mosaic floors in modern private houses, which at that time must have been visible in their courtyards. He evaluates as the most important find the one in the yard of Ekaterini Benardou, née Meintani.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> “Under Epiphanius, our bishop, highly beloved of God, this work was restored”. This is the inscription in its entirety: Stikas 1955, 236 with pl. 84a.

<sup>32</sup> Stikas 1955; 1956; Orlandos 1955; 1956; Hood & Boardman 1955, 13–14; Hood 1956, 13–14; Jameson *et al.* 1994, 110–111; Sodini 1970, 705–707; 1980; Spiro 1978, 150–168.

<sup>33</sup> Sodini 1980; Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, 63–66.

<sup>34</sup> Stikas 1956, 183.

<sup>35</sup> Stikas 1955, 239; 1976, 200–201.

### Rescue excavations

#### THE OTE PLOT

After these limited but very important excavations carried out by the Archaeological Society of Athens, Hermione came under the control of the Greek Archaeological Service. In total, five areas were excavated in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in relation to the method and the possibility of inspecting construction works. One of the most noteworthy finds came to light during the construction of the building of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization (OTE) at the entrance of the city of Ermioni (Fig. 6; Kossyva 2021, fig. 1). During campaigns in 1988 and 1990, a particularly interesting Roman tomb monument was discovered, consisting of a bed-shaped lid (Fig. 7) and a three-stepped *crepidoma* with a small burial chamber in the middle.<sup>36</sup> The lid was transferred and placed in front of the old community centre (the current Port Authority), where it has remained ever since. The *crepidoma* that was found complete inside the phreatic zone was dismantled and placed on the Bisti, temporarily according to the Central Archaeological Council’s intention, in order to be relocated to another site. I suggested to the Municipality of Hermione in the late 1990s that its restoration should be financed, and, in 2003, the Municipality commissioned the architect/restorer Georgios Antoniou to study the documentation of the monument and present a proposal for its restoration to its original form.<sup>37</sup> However, it took more than ten years to overcome various problems and to finally submit in 2014 the restoration report, the structural appraisal, and the proposal for its

<sup>36</sup> Catling 1988–1989, 30; Piteros 1991, 105–106.

<sup>37</sup> Antoniou 2014.



Fig. 8. Excavations in the necropolis, 1991. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.

configuration and placement. The study was approved by the Central Archaeological Council in 2015, the approval decision was issued in 2016, and its financial acceptance by the Municipality took place in 2017. Recently, the Municipality of Ermionida decided to grant a municipal property, adjacent to the site where the monument was discovered, for its placement. A 30-year-old sad story.

### THE EXCAVATIONS BY THE ERMIONI SECONDARY SCHOOL

The excavations in the Gymnasium-Lykeion (the Ermioni Secondary School) mark an important moment for the archaeological explorations of Hermione. They took place from 1991 to 1994 under my direction, and were occasioned by the request for the construction of the new school building, in the area of the Hagios Andreas Church (Kossyva 2021, fig. 1). In 1991, during the opening of test trenches, the interior of a funerary enclosure was found and destroyed by a mechanical shovel. The necessity of excavation of the plot before any decision was made for the construction of the school complex led to the provision of a small grant from the Ministry of Culture (Fig. 8). After a month of research, we were certain that we had located the part of the necropolis of the city that Philadelphus had excavated at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>38</sup> The removal of the topsoil brought to light six burial enclosures and we managed to excavate a few tombs under extremely adverse conditions. By investigating the subsoil, we also managed to locate the northern boundary of the necropolis and could thus allow the construction of the school building in an area that was free of antiquities.<sup>39</sup> The fate of the archaeological site

was however postponed indefinitely (Fig. 9). Despite requests for the continuation of the excavation and the preservation of the unexcavated tombs, there was no response from potential funding authorities, the Ministry of Culture or the Community of Hermione at that time. Sadly, a “private initiative” picked up the excavations: two years later tomb robbers took it upon themselves to complete the work that had been left unfinished by state support, looting two tombs and attempting to open a third one. Seven workmen from Argos then were settled hastily in Hermione to investigate all the graves that had been found and were in danger of being looted. In about a week—and thanks to the superhuman efforts of all members of the mission—we were able to investigate the 19 tombs that were visible and thus tempting to peculiar ancestor-worshippers. The most notable find, the Warrior Tomb, was granted to us on the Greek National Holiday of the 25th of March and a crowd of Hermionians out celebrating came to share a unique experience with us, as the burial of an Archaic warrior, perhaps a veteran of the Persian Wars, came to light (found in Burial Enclosure ΣΤ, Figs. 1, 10a–b; Kossyva 2021, figs. 2–4). In 1994, with a special grant from the Ministry of Culture, a six-week excavation was carried out, after general cleaning and earthmoving at the area. By coincidence, the most important find of the campaign was found on the other Greek National Holiday, the 28th of October: an impressive early Classical caryatid mirror (Fig. 11). The rescue excavations, carried out by the Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities under my supervision, were of short duration and could not be completed due to lack of funds. Fortunately, they still enabled us to form an accurate picture of the layout, structure, and density of the necropolis over time.<sup>40</sup>

### MAGOULA

In the autumn of 1994, a short test excavation was carried out on the top of Magoula Hill (Gerding 2021, fig. 1).<sup>41</sup> This site had already been identified by researchers from the American School of Classical Studies at Athens during their extensive surface survey in the Hermionid.<sup>42</sup> The statistics of their surface finds, which placed the main use of the site in prehistoric

<sup>40</sup> Papadimitriou 1994; 2007, 92–95; 2012, 218–223; Kossyva 2021 in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> Papadimitriou 1994, 148. The plot was owned by P. Papailiou.

<sup>42</sup> Scientific research on ancient Hermione has significantly benefited by the work of the great archaeologists Michael and Virginia Jameson and their colleagues Tjeerd van Andel and Curtis Runnels, who conducted important research in the area from the 1950s onwards, while during 1979–1982 they undertook extensive surface surveys in southern Argolis and enriched our knowledge with two seminal monographs, Jameson *et al.* 1994 and van Andel & Runnels 1987. Also of great importance for the investigation of the area is the work of Nikolaos Faraklas published in 1973.

<sup>38</sup> For the necropolis, see further Kossyva 2021 in this volume.

<sup>39</sup> Spathari & Papadimitriou 1991, 104–105.



*Fig. 9. Excavations in the necropolis, 1994. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.*



*Fig. 10a–b. The Warrior Tomb in Burial Enclosure ΣΤ. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.*



*Fig. 11. Early Classical caryatid mirror from the Burial Enclosure Z. Copyright Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolid, Hellenic Ministry of Culture.*

times, were confirmed by the excavation findings. The building remains that were found were also from the prehistoric period, datable to the late Middle Helladic and early Late Helladic periods. A pilot excavation carried out in another area of Magoula Hill, in 2016, also confirmed the use of the site in prehistoric times.<sup>43</sup>

### REMAINS FROM THE BISTI TO PRON HILL

From the 1990s onwards, the number of archaeological investigations necessitated by building works in Hermione intensified. Over the last 30 years, 24 plots within the urban fabric of Hermione have been investigated, mainly by private funding. Apart from a few properties that fall within the area of the extensive ancient necropolis, the other plots mainly brought to light remains of Roman houses, while the existence of pottery from Geometric to Hellenistic times in the deeper strata confirmed the location of the ancient city, in the area west of the tip of the Bisti up to the slopes of Pron Hill, east of the Taxiarches Church. In contrast, inspection of recent construction works around the Taxiarches Church and west of it up to the top of Pron Hill has not yet brought to light any archaeological evidence of habitation.

### THE REMAINS UNDER THE TAXIARCHES CHURCH

In 2015, during the restoration process of the Taxiarches Church from the, at that time, 25th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, the foundations of an ancient temple were traced under the floor of the narthex of the church, which can be identified with the Temple of Demeter Chthonia (*Gerding 2021, fig. 3.20; Blid 2021, figs. 2, 5–9*).<sup>44</sup> The remains were investigated and documented first by the Ephorate, by that time called the 4th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, and then by the collaborators of our present Greco-Swedish research programme. The temple is restored by Dr Jesper Blid as a hexastyle Doric peripteral temple, datable to the end of the 5th century BC.<sup>45</sup>

## Epilogue—prospects

Reading Pausanias' account of Hermione, a city which he thought "afforded much to write about", the visible archaeological record may seem poor. Ancient monuments have been widely used for building material over the centuries, and of course, modern Ermioni lies on top of ancient Hermione,

making it very difficult to conduct archaeological investigations. This, in combination with the difficulty of revealing the full extent of the few but important remains visible today, places Hermione in a poorer and weaker position to promote her glorious past. In spite of such difficulties, it is our hope that the on-going project, now in its second phase, will help Hermione regain some knowledge of its history by specifically tackling the problems posed by the particular archaeological landscape of Hermione.

As closing remarks, I wish to underline that much more must be done in order to protect and promote the cultural heritage of today's beautiful and vibrant city of Hermione. For the time being, the Hermionid silently endures the fate of abandonment by the modern state, which focuses on larger urban and provincial centres. Hidden in this small corner of the eastern Peloponnese, the city no longer waits for assistance from the competent authorities, but rather on occasion takes matters into its own hands and tries to guide its fate with projects of local scope. History books are written through the effort of the city's romantics, and in summertime occasional scientific events are arranged for the local audience. But is this the fate Hermione deserves?

I have worked in and for the area as an employee of the Archaeological Service since 1991 and I have always felt the strong desire of the modern Hermionians to share with me the history of their city, as well as their sincere willingness to highlight it. But it seems that so far no one has given them the tools to do so.

Hermione needs a series of interventions that could contribute to this end:

- The continuation of the excavation research at the necropolis.
- The promotion of the city and the cemetery's visible monuments and the creation of a cultural trail through the city and surrounding landscape.
- The return of antiquities from Hermione that are kept in foreign museums.
- The creation of a local museum.

We offer our proposals here as well and we hope that someone, somewhere, will listen to them. The joint research programme with the Swedish Institute at Athens is the first step in the right direction.

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<sup>43</sup> The plot is owned by Oratios Koutas.

<sup>44</sup> For the identification, see Blid 2021 in this volume.

<sup>45</sup> See Blid 2021 in this volume.

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