

Communities, Landscapes, and Interaction: An Introduction

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This particular proceedings volume constitutes one of the final outcomes of the research project “IGEAN—Innovative Geophysical Approaches for the Study of Early Agricultural Villages of Neolithic Thessaly,” carried out by the Laboratory of Geophysical–Satellite Remote Sensing and Archaeo-environment (GeoSat ReSeArch Lab) of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies–Foundation for Research and Technology, Hellas (IMS-FORTH), in cooperation with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, Ministry of Culture and Sports during the period of 2012–2015. The IGEAN research project was co-financed by Greek and European Union resources. The international conference, “Communities, Landscapes, and Interaction in Neolithic Greece” was held in Rethymno, Crete, on the 29th and the 30th of May 2015, at the premises of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies as the final event of the IGEAN research project. This volume is a collection of selected papers that were presented during the corresponding international conference, and it constitutes the outcome of this constructive two-day meeting.

The main aim of this volume was to bring together a wide range of scholars contributing different forms of archaeological evidence, in order to demonstrate the varied methodological and theoretical developments of the study of Neolithic Greece and unravel the diversity of material culture remains and interpretations that have emerged in the last few decades from this part of southeastern Europe. Universities and research institutes from numerous destinations are represented together with the Greek Archaeological Service and foreign schools based in Greece, providing comprehensive and detailed coverage. The range of papers reflects the current rapidly changing archaeological environment of Neolithic studies, while various methodological and theoretical approaches, as applied to the study of material culture, highlight the current aims of research on Neolithic Greece.

Our efforts were also meant to open a door for a volume of papers that synthesizes archaeological

evidence with historical, regional, and social contexts, and that penetrates into temporal and spatial slices in order to expose the diversity of the Neolithic period in Greece. The aim was to capture the transition of archaeological practice from holistic great schemes and grand narratives to small-scale studies that focus on micro-histories and the analysis of local-scale phenomena that delve deeply into the core of social complexity in Neolithic Greece. This volume examines our changing perceptions of Neolithic landscapes in Greece and reconsiders the dynamics of human–environment interactions through a selection of site-specific and interdisciplinary papers. An emphasis on village community, household, and open-air communal spaces reproduces the dominance of the archaeological record over funerary and other monuments in Neolithic Greece, while also demonstrating our growing achievements toward a better understanding of these prehistoric societies. Moreover, some papers revisit older archaeological evidence under the scope of contemporary human-centered theoretical schemes, as well as the application of new scientific techniques such as geophysical prospection, micromorphology, and thin-section petrographic analysis.

Scales of Time and Space: From Grand Narratives to Micro-Scale Studies

The research framework for studies of the Neolithic period in Greece has been slow to align with the most recent theoretical and analytical trends (Chourmouziadis 2009; Nanoglou 2001:303). From the context of cultural and national identities (Mylonas 1929; Tsountas 2000 [1908]) to the quest for social structures (Chourmouziadis 1979; Theocharis 1967), the application of enthoarchaeology in action (Efstratiou 2002), and the currently prevailing human-centered approach with an emphasis on the regional scale and local distinctiveness (e.g. Kalogiropoulou 2014; Kotsakis 2014; Nanoglou 2008; Pappa et al.

2004; Souvatzi 2008; Urem-Kotsou and Kotsakis 2007; Valamoti 2005), Neolithic research in Greece has come a long way. Over the last few decades, a significant shift in analytical inquiry has taken place, moving toward a wider choice of various theoretical schemes and interpretational approaches that have produced a more diverse, rich, and complex research agenda for the whole of Greek prehistory (Kotsakis 2014).

For a long time archaeological research on Neolithic Greece has focused on mounds as obvious landmarks in generally flat landscapes. Since the early 1990s, however, the large-scale salvage excavations that have been carried out broadly throughout the country have become the driving force, with a significant effect on the way Neolithic research in Greece has been formed. Large-scale excavations enabled a shift toward analytical approaches from the chronological and typo-technological descriptions of material culture remains, to multi-temporal spatial analyses, from small-sized and deep trenches to broad-scale interpretative approaches to social structure and communal coherence. Extensive areas of archaeological sites have been exposed at such a scale for the first time, revealing new and unexpected finds that have transformed the research framework and gradually changed our established perceptions of Neolithic Greece. Unexplored landscapes exposed unexpected evidence of habitation, while new settlement formations, such as flat-extended and lakeside sites, have been added to the well-known low mounds and tell sites. Different building forms and construction techniques, together with the emergence of various spatial configurations and residential elements, featured a growing diversity in settlement organization and a variability of people's daily routines in different communities that formed dissimilar cultural and social site-scapes. In the course of new finds, significant theoretical and methodological developments have been noted in recent years. The shift away from environmental and technological analyses in favor of social approaches and the production of regional narratives, for example, is discernible in recent studies of residential elements (e.g. Kloukinas 2014; Pappa 2008), the social perspectives of pottery and tool products (Skourtopoulou 2006; Tsoraki 2007; Urem-Kotsou 2006), individuality (Nanoglou 2009), cooking and consumption practices as a glue of social cohesion (Kalogiropoulou 2013), and network analysis (e.g. Dimoula 2014; Pentedeka 2008). In this framework, the house and household have become a central analytical topic in the recent research agenda (e.g. Efstratiou 2007; Halstead 1999; Kotsakis 1999; Nanoglou 2008; Souvatzi 2008). Moreover, daily

routines, such as cooking and tool-making, are now historically examined as part of embedded social performances (e.g. Kalogiropoulou 2014; Valamoti 2004, 2005). The present volume reflects these new approaches in the study of site-specific material culture through the lenses of daily life performance, personhood, sharing of social commodities, and events of social cohesion.

The Worlds of Neolithic Greece

A number of issues are addressed in this volume, spanning from settlement patterns and spatial organization, human choices about landscape habitation, land-use strategies, building techniques, daily routines, and the creation of networks among communities. These issues are approached through the analysis of a wide range of material culture remains, such as pottery, lithic tools, architectural remains, and figurines, together with faunal and plant remains. The questions posed and the vocabulary used demonstrate the emergence of a new set of ideas regarding our current perception of Neolithic worlds that arrives via the present research interest in regional continuity and local distinctiveness. Neolithic histories have been enriched by the results of recent archaeological investigations that build upon previous analyses and interpretations. On the other hand, the Neolithization of the Greek peninsula—as with burial practices and rituals—have a limited representation in this volume (Chapters 2, 13, and 27), to some extent reflecting changes in our research questions and the constraints of archaeological evidence to provide succinct answers to mobility, funerary practices, and ideological and symbolic aspects of peoples' lives in this region. Contributions cover a geographically broad area from northern Greece, Thessaly, Euboea, central Greece, the Peloponnese, the Cyclades, and the Ionian islands, representing different archaeological traditions, perspectives, and research dynamics, and working with different media. On the other hand, Crete, the Dodecanese, and the islands of the southeastern Aegean are not represented in this synthesis volume.

The volume is organized in three interrelated and complementary parts: I. Communities, Social Space, and Dimensions of Neolithic Lifeways (and Death), II. Landscape Dynamics and Subsistence Strategies, and III. Interactions and Material Perspectives. Even if springing from different analytical scales, diversity emerges from the papers in all three sections as a distinctive, key characteristic of understanding Neolithic communities in Greece.

The first part of this volume is shaped by a col-

lection of 12 papers, with an emphasis on the village community, settlement variations, and intra-site spatial formations. It begins with Agathe Reingruber's paper criticizing the prompt adoption of Near Eastern concepts and terminology for the explanation of the Greek Neolithization process and challenging the holistic approach of the "Neolithic package" by offering an analytical model based on mobility and connectivity in time and space (Chapter 2). In the context of new approaches and innovations, Apostolos Sarris and his team introduce research questions in regard to the organization of space in Neolithic communities by developing an integrated, non-destructive methodology of geospatial technology (i.e. satellite remote sensing, remotely piloted aircraft systems, and ground-based geophysical surveys) (Chapter 3). Exciting geophysical results are also discussed by Visviki Magoula in the context of southeastern Thessaly, where an interdisciplinary research team, led by Eva Alram-Stern and Apostolos Sarris, developed a comparative methodology that integrates excavation data and geophysical records and has resulted in a better understanding of inter- and intra-site settlement patterns at the site (Chapter 9).

A first synthesis of inhabitation practices and daily life at the site of Vasilika Kyparissi is provided by Maria Pappa, Stratos Nanoglou, and Melina Efthymiadou (Chapter 4). The contextual approach of this synthesis fills in the broader picture of variability and diversity that has been emerging from central Macedonia over the last three decades. Moreover, following a contextual and synthetic approach, Dimitra Malamidou, together with an interdisciplinary team of distinguished experts, reconsiders old and new data and—through an integrated study of architecture, artifactual, and archaeobotanical remains—attempts a time-specific and focused analysis of the relationships developed between people and nature (Chapter 5). Preliminary results of the chipped stone industry and pottery finds from the site of Koutroulou Magoula in northern Phthiotida are subsequently presented in their wider social context by a team led by Yannis Hamilakis and Nina Kyparissi-Apostolika (Chapter 6). Another interdisciplinary team, this time led by John Coleman, contributes to the conference proceedings with a summary paper that touches upon the dynamic relationship between the Neolithic community of Halai on the North Euboean Gulf and the surrounding environment, through the analysis of various forms of material culture (Chapter 7). A synthesis of recent results coming from a multidisciplinary project directed by William Parkinson enhances our understanding of the use of Alepotrypa Cave through the Neolithic period (Chapter 8). An-

other among the set of group projects, Josette Renard and William Cavanagh provide insight into the Middle Neolithic spatial development of Kouphovouno in the southern Peloponnese (Chapter 10).

Although evidence of house structures and architectural elements is sporadically and implicitly delivered in several of the papers in Part I, Dimitris Kloukinas offers a comprehensive and finer-grained regional analysis that unravels the variability of house forms and building techniques in Neolithic northern Greece (Chapter 11). Tomas Alusik presents his view on defensive architecture as a means of settlement protection and land use from selected sites in Thessaly, western Macedonia, and Crete (Chapter 12). The final paper in this section, by Katerina Psimogiannou, explores the role of funerary practices in central and southern Greece as agents of various cultural expressions and focal places for social interaction during the Neolithic period (Chapter 13).

Subsequently, the second part of this volume is shaped by a smaller set of seven papers, with an emphasis on subsistence strategies, landscape dynamics, and the interactive relationship between humans and nature. Evita Kalogiropoulou reconsiders landscape dynamics in the context of Final Neolithic islands as a process of social transformation that embeds changes in landscape preferences, using a synthesis comparative studies of habitation scenery and the remains of settlement formations (Chapter 14). Dwelling on Aegean island contexts, Žarko Tankosić and Markos Katsianis develop an integrated analysis of old and new data to explore the way the landscape was populated and socially constructed in southern Euboea (Chapter 15). Furthermore, the submerged Neolithic landscape of the Bay of Kiladha—beside Franchthi Cave—is explored by Julian Beck, Dimitris Sakellariou, and Despina Koutsoumpa (Chapter 17). Moving to the west seascape of Greece, Georgia Stratouli and Odysseas Metaxas discuss the symbolic connotations of the special status of Drakaina Cave and the effect of landscape on the cultural perception of the site as a place of repetitive gatherings (Chapter 16).

Another insightful paper from the Neolithic site of Koutroulou Magoula, led by Georgia Koromila with contributions from team colleagues, provides an integrated methodological approach that explores animal-related mobility and the use of ecological resources in central Greece (Chapter 18). William Cavanagh and his colleagues offer an overview of Kouphovouno, exploring local farming strategies of the Middle and Late Neolithic site. In return, they suggest a variability of subsistence preferences at the regional scale (Chapter 19). Additionally, George

Kazantzis discusses different aspects of social space through a comprehensive study of faunal remains from private and public contexts at the Late Neolithic site of Promachon-Topolnica (Chapter 20).

The third and final part of this volume is shaped by a collection of 10 papers, with an emphasis on the mobility of humans and goods, social interaction, and the creation of social networks through a selection of material remains. Nikos Efstratiou opens the discussion in this section with a critical commentary on the issue of social interaction in prehistory and the way it is manifested archaeologically (Chapter 21). Subsequently, Dushka Urem-Kotsou and a team of pottery experts provide evidence of close connections and interregional relations between selected Early and Middle Neolithic sites in Thessaly and western Macedonia (Chapter 22). Areti Pentedeka, having examined the pottery from a large number of Middle and Late Neolithic settlements in Thessaly, attempts a regional-scale network analysis that exposes complexity and interregional diversification (Chapter 23). Pottery is also the key analytical material in Vagia Mastrogiannopoulou's study of exchange networks from Sarakenos Cave (Chapter 24), while Lily Bonga focuses on painted and Impresso pottery from the Early Neolithic site of Mavropigi-Filotsairi in western Macedonia in order to challenge the direction and spread of the Neolithic into Europe (Chapter 25). In addition, David Michael Smith explores the possibility of local Final Neolithic networks on the Argolic Gulf through the study of certain burial behaviors (Chapter 26). Finally, Eva Alram-Stern studies the symbolic properties of a figurine deposition in the Final Neolithic phases of the site of Aegina-Kolonna (Chapter 27).

Moving to the analytical framework of stone tool studies, a selection of site-specific and specialized papers touches upon the various aspects of human interaction and the choices people make based on landscape availability. Tasos Bekiaris and his colleagues surpass a mono-causal explanation and suggest a more dynamic interpretation about the impact of complex social factors on the perception of physical properties by Neolithic agents (Chapter 28). A comparative study of the chipped stone industry from different sites in northern Greece by Odysseas Kakavakis unfolds glimpses of the various changing conditions in which Neolithic farmers interacted with each other (Chapter 29). Furthermore, Lilian Dogiama, with her preliminary results on the chipped stone technology from the site of Revenia Korinos, makes a significant contribution to the volume and attempts to alter our perception of Early Neolithic network systems (Chapter 30).

Looking Ahead

In the last two decades, central and northern Greece have emerged as leading foci of Neolithic research in the country, creating uneven geographical trajectories for our understanding of the period. In this context, the discovery of varied and diverse cultural remains from salvage excavations has not been the result of specific focused research strategies, but rather, to some extent, a result of chance. The wealth and diversity of material culture, however, offers exciting new opportunities for research and triggers novel, productive questions. The present collection of papers reflects the diversity of finds, methods, and archaeological practices that embodies past practices and contemporary methodological and theoretical trends, providing in the meantime a sense of future direction. Today, Neolithic research in Greece is more advanced and ready to stand dialectically among different associated traditions, to produce a distinctive regional research agenda, to effectively confront the fragmented picture of material remains with multiple tools, and to further create smaller or larger narratives. What is clear at the moment is the increasing quest to leave mono-causal or singular historic interpretations usually embedded in grand narratives for micro-scale studies, and to challenge ingrained theoretical perspectives by articulating intensive and multifaceted histories. In this sense, this volume is an essential addition to the increasing body of knowledge from Neolithic Greece that fills a lacuna in contemporary literature and enhances our understanding of the broader context of European Neolithic communities.

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