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CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESCUE EXCAVATIONS AT THE NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF STAVROUPOLI, THESSALONIKI

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The text published below is a translation of the main portion of the concluding chapter from the first of two published volumes on the Neolithic settlement of Stavroupoli (*Grammenos D, Kotsos D. B., 2000*). These two volumes present the comprehensive results of rescue excavations at more than ten properties in the Neolithic settlement of the municipality of Stavroupoli, Thessaloniki.

Houses and Structures

Although there is no possibility whatever of our speaking of a settlement, nor even of a dwelling, it is certain that all the housing types known throughout the Balkans are encountered. However, except for one case, piles are set directly in the ground, either in its natural state or after leveling, and not in a foundation of built mud walls or incorporated into walls, as was the case with the recently-discovered examples at, e.g., Karanovo (*Hiller S., Nikolov V., 1997*). Stone seems to have been used for building walls during Stavroupoli II. It would seem that neither clay nor organic materials were used, even for plastering. For example, no impressions of branches, reeds, or straw were preserved that would presuppose their use in construction, in contrast with the older part – possibly one or two centuries later than Stavroupoli – of the settlement at Makriyalos (according to the most recent excavation data, *Pappa M., Besios M., 1999a; 1999b*). This fact, which may be accidental, and the use of pits, must be an architectural feature peculiar to this settlement and to those of

the wider region (a number of persuasive proposals concerning their reconstruction were put forward for Divostin, *McPherson A., Srejovic D., 1988*). In any case, the pit with stepped access of Dagli 12 could only with great difficulty be considered an underground dwelling-space, covered by planks, as nothing similar has been found, and the pit's small dimensions would not have permitted such use. In any case, the identification of pits in a variety of sizes and with a range of uses appears to open a new chapter in Neolithic research in the region. Further north, such pits were known from a much earlier period, the end of the MN. "Pit-dwellings" contemporary with Stavroupoli I are noted at Promachona (*Koukouli-Chysanthaki H., et al. 1998*) - just as we have noted them at Makriyalos (see also *Pappa M., et al. 1998*) - and at the Toumba of Kremasti-Koilada (*Chondrogianni-Metoki M., 1999*), contemporary with Stavroupoli I, in the so-called transitional period of Bulgaria (*Todorova H., 1995*) as being storage spaces within dwellings (*Karul N., 2000*).

From what one is able to conclude from the above-mentioned structures as pit-dwellings, none have preserved intact their excavation contexts. But this does not mean that those proposed as dwellings could not have been dwellings; rather, their dimensions, the holes for piles – chiefly at Makriyalos – as well as the large number discovered would suggest that they actually were dwellings. Their sole use could not have been, e.g. for the storage of grain, as Lichter would have it due to his unfamiliarity with recent materials from, e.g., Macedonia (*1993*, 26; this view was accepted by Nikolov in his review of Lichter in *Germania* 76, 1998, 333-337).

The so-called "ditches" now appear to constitute an excavation reality for the Neolithic of the region and apparently the settlement of Stavroupoli is to be included in this group of levels of settlements where ditches have been discovered, with Makriyalos first and foremost; in the case of Stavroupoli, excavation documentation must continue. It also appears almost certain, at least on the basis of the data obtained up to now from the settlements referred to here, that in contrast to Thessaly no interior of a dwelling or interior space has been discovered intact. As a result, it is difficult, hypothetical, even risky to attempt an approach to the substantive question of the household, i.e. of its material furnishings, something which is vital for matters Neolithic (*Halstead P., 1999; Stefanovic M., Tringham R., 1997; Souvatzi S., 2000*). In terms of the completeness of

their data, the unique examples from Northern Greece, though considerably more recent than Stavroupoli, would appear to be the household assemblages from the French and Greek excavation sectors at the base of the toumba of the prehistoric settlement of Dikili Tash (*Treuil R., Tsirtsoni Z., 2000*), where the view is expressed that it was not only subsistence-related activities connected which took place within these Neolithic dwellings; this view, however, does not appear to be confirmed by findings from the Greek excavation trench (*Koukouli-Chysanthaki H., et al. 1996, 695*).

There has been an effort to renew our knowledge of the environment west of the Thermaic Gulf, its varying size, plant-life as determined by analysis of pollen, etc. (*Andreou S., Kotsakis K., Fotiadis K., 1996*, 562 ff. and note 185), on the basis of the excavations at the prehistoric settlement of Archontiko, Giannitsa (*Papanthimiou A., Pilali A., 1997*, 171-172). During the age when the settlement was inhabited (LN-Early Bronze Age, settlement nr. 14, *Andreou S., Kotsakis K., Fotiadis M., 1996*, 563 fig. 2), "it was observed that the sea was 5 km. further south of Archontiko … It thus seems that there was the possibility for development of a relatively broad tidal zone with coastal salt-water swamps, where the water's depth did not exceed 1 m., especially in the areas around the mouths of local torrents Thus, the gulf lying in front of Archontiko was about like the modern bay of Thessaloniki, as it was before human intervention in the 20th c." Comparable research was not carried out for Stavroupoli, but on the basis of Archontiko, it would seem that Stavroupoli, through coastal salt-water swamps, was even closer to the sea.

Not a single example of any sort of ideogram or writing more generally, either painted or incised, was identified among the entire assemblage of pottery and small clay objects (*Grammenos D., 1997* for a discussion of this topic). We note that a bronze bead was found (Proxenou Koromila 4). Had sifting occurred, more examples might have been found. But in any case the use of bronze in the wider region is documented (recently at Makriyalos *AEMTh* 8, 1994, 137 ff.; 9, 1995, 173 ff., Mandalo *AEMTh* 10A, 1996, 146; FN, Promachona, *AEMTh* 12, 1998, 70 ff.; Agia Lydia Asprovalta, *Grammenos D., Kotsos S., 2000*).

On the basis of radiocarbon dating of samples done at the Demokritos lab, and taking into account the totality of high and low published dates for the wider region (*Andreou S., Kotsakis K., Fotiadis M., 1996*, 538 ff. for the

general framework; *Grammenos D., 1991,* 95 ff. on Vasilika; *Fotiadis M., Chondrogianni-Metoki A., 1993* for Kitrini Limni dating to the LN; *Efstratiou N., et.al. 1998,* 58 for Makri; *Boyadziev Y, 1995* for Bulgaria; Thissen L., 2000 for Karanovo), we discover that on the basis of these datings, the Demokritos lab puts Stavroupoli I near the beginning of the MN, i.e. perhaps more than 250 years earlier than what was anticipated, and not towards the end of this phase, i.e. near Vasilika I (Karanovo III, end (?), Anza I, Sitagroi I, Dimitra I, Sesklo III), as would have been expected (*Coleman J. E., 1992*), although the chronological inclusion of Vasilika I in this group was done only through relative dating criteria. Rough comparisons with well-known MN vase assemblages, e.g. that of Thessaly (e.g. *Papathanasopoulos G. A., 1996,* 1100-111), of Vasilika I and II (even if in this phase there were added a large number of shapes – around 30), with the painted categories of, e.g., Thessaly or Servia, would probably not permit us to accept a correspondence with Thessalian and other chronologies obtained through radiocarbon dating procedures, at least in the present phase. But one should take into consideration the fact that all the samples came from wood found in the general area around hearths, or within hearths, and as G. Maniatis, the Director of the Demokritos Archaeometry laboratory, makes clear: "The samples may have come from the inner rings of trees of very great age [in our case, 300 years], and there may have been selected small pieces which came exclusively from inner rings." And certainly there is nothing to exclude the possibility of reviewing the radiocarbon chronologies for the beginning of the Late Neolithic.

A small-scale systematic approach would be helpful for the data from Vasilika and Stavroupoli, as well as for that coming from the settlement located on the site of today's International Trade Fair (ITF) grounds, the preliminary announcement of whose excavation data (*Pappa M., 1993*) would suggest the following:

1. In the final publication it should have been clarified how category 30 of the ITF settlement differed – as noted – from that of Vasilika as regards decorative motifs. From this standpoint, there should be no substantial differences between Vasilika and Stavroupoli.

2. There are no examples of the characteristic Thessalian MN painted pottery from Stavroupoli. Thus, it must be considered certain that the International Trade Fair settlement site is older, and is to be assigned to MN II.

As concerns the important issue of Neolithic research today – and not only local research concerning one region – the question of the social and economic relations of toumba-flat settlement and the various problems and questions which emerge from this, I have expressed my views upon publication of the exhibition catalogue, "Neolithic Civilization in Greece" (*Grammenos D., 1996*). Perhaps these views cannot be modified given the state of modern research. However, since it would seem that on the basis of recent publications (*Kotsakis K., 1999; Halstead P., 1999*) these views are not considered to be in harmony with the directions of current research, I will return to them by citing a number of observations.

1. The Neolithic-Early Bronze Age settlement of Dikili Tash has been shown to have been established initially on the slightly sloping cone of a Pleistocene deposit (*Koukouli-Chrysanthaki H., et al. 1996,* 683 ff.), due to its topographical advantages. As students of the site agree, "its modern-day form has emerged from the erosion of its slopes," and, I might add, from the shrinkage of the deposits towards its peak, as well as the cone we referred to, in the Bronze Age. Of course, the settlement of the end of the MN and beginning of the LN – indeed, perhaps throughout its life – was flat, or rather, would not have had a tendency to shrink, and that to an enormous extent, an issue about which I am unaware of any discussion in the literature (*Koukouli-Chrysanthaki H., et al. 1996,* 683 fig. 2). The case of Dimitra (*Grammenos D., 1997*) is similar, as are those of all comparable sites in Eastern Macedonia.

2. Comparable examples from Central Macedonia include Thermi B (*Grammenos D., et al. 1990; 1992*), or Mesimeriani (*Grammenos D., Kotsos S., 2002,* Addendum).

3. All the flat sites remain flat throughout all their habitation phases, unless they have Bronze Age fill. If Neolithic fill(s) also appear in a shrunken form (as toumbas), this is owing to the reasons given in the case of Dikili Tash, which I have in the past supported, and which do not appear to differ from those operative at e.g. Karanovo. Recent measurements (*Andreou S., Kotsakis K., 1992,* 352) within the framework of a surface survey of Langada appear to have demonstrated the same for the settlement of Kavalari, which is shown to have been a flat Neolithic site that shrank into a toumba in the Bronze Age. The flat settlement, which was naturally far more extensive than that of the toumba, was covered by alluvial fill. The base of the toumba contained Early Bronze Age fill, as this writer can verify

as a result of post factum examination of the disturbed fill created by the opening of a fuel pipeline. In the course of an archaeological examination carried out during the construction of the new Egnatia Odos, we identified a similar phenomenon, though one involving not alluvial but man-made fill, through systematic geological measurements and examination of the material coming from the drilling sample taken at the base of the Perivolaki toumba, at a distance 70 m. to the South and running West (350 m.) and East (350 m.), There were 21 measurements taken in all, which demonstrated that there was fill over a length of at least 700 meters, ranging in depth from 5 m. (at the edges) to more than 8 m. (at the center). The pottery that came from the sample is somewhat difficult to date with certainty, but it is clearly prehistoric. I believe that this fact, in combination with the fact that in the wake of excavation research in mid-2001 for complementary works being carried out on the Egnatia Odos, it is certain that the surface fill belongs to the Iron Age, together with the fact that the fill from the toumba belongs to the Iron and Bronze Ages, and the fact that Huertley had identified Neolithic pottery, allows us to conclude that we are dealing with yet another enormous Neolithic settlement. However, as determined by excavation (*Lioutas A., Kotsos S., 2002*), it was also a very large Iron Age settlement.

4. We can make similar observations concerning sites in Western Macedonia (Giannitsa area: *Chrysostomou P., 1996*, 164 ff.; Imathia: *Stefani E., Merousis N., 1997*, 94 ff.; *1998*, 384 ff.), but there is no question that the issue would require systematic and extensive investigation. In any event, in cases where there is no continuation of habitation into the Early Bronze Age, these researchers understand by the term "toumba" very low outcroppings of large, extensive settlements (personal communication). These outcroppings are apparently the result of erosion, which does not find appropriate ground for the creation of a toumba.

5. Concerning the extent of flat settlements, the density of habitation, and related questions: the pre-Dimini (I) and Dimini (II) phases of Makriyalos minimally overlap in terms of their development in space (*Besios M., Pappa M., 1993*), each occupying about one-half of the total extent of the settlement's 500 stremmata (125 acres), of which approximately 12% was excavated. During the pre-Dimini phase of Makriyalos (I), a more recent phase than Stavroupoli I, there was relatively sparse habitation, in contrast to the Stavroupoli I phase. The population

explosion – for how else could dense habitation (as expressed by the density of dwellings and every type of construction) be understood? – is observed everywhere at excavated sites in the Balkans. However, on the basis of the Stavroupoli I data, dense habitation is also identified in MNIII, as was clear from the data we have cited, in combination with a total expanse of some 100 stremmata (25 acres). We also have fill documented through drilling, and not simply through the spread of bones at the enormous LN settlement of Assiros (*Andreou S., Kotsakis K., 1992,* 352 ff.), which extends over 300 stremmata (75 acres). A recent postgraduate thesis (*Poloukidou C., 2001*) has demonstrated that the spread of archaeological material across this expanse of land does not appear to have any empty spaces that would permit the hypothesis of sparse habitation by virtue of the presence of e.g. cultivated plots between houses. A comparable recent work, even including population estimates, was done at Çatalhoyuk (*Hodder I., 1999*) within the framework of preliminary works in anticipation of beginning new excavations there. The population estimate regarding the eastern portion of the settlement at the end of the Neolithic period ranged between 5,000 and 10,000 people in the opinion of the specialist Matthews, though Hodder limited this number to under 5,000 in his own conclusions (*1999,* 363).

On the basis of electromagnetic testing, and according to more modest calculations, an expanse of 40 stremmata (10 acres) has been estimated for the excavated settlement of Promachona-Topolnica (*Koukouli-Chrysanthaki H., 1995*).

Bearing in mind all the above, I believe that my view, expressed in the past regarding the non-existence of shrinkage and the accompanying conclusions for the LN, is not at all "astonishing" (*Kotsakis K., 1999,* 68), but rather is supported by the actual data and does not seem to accord solely with theoretical positions (*Kotsakis K., 1999; Halstead P., 1999,* etc.). This view could be summarized as follows: 1. Neolithic toumbas were reference points to ancestors, a sort of "habitation monuments". Substantive differences – ecistic and others – are documented between the toumba-"acropolis" of Sesklo and the surrounding 10-stremma "cities" (Theocharis) (cf. *Kotsakis K., 1994*). 2. The differences between flat settlements and their shrinkage into toumbas, as at Sesklo, is a phenomenon which becomes comprehensible at many levels: whether at that of intensification of production which is related to the development of the household as an

independent production unit that altered the social character of Neolithic society, something which is expressed by the acceptance of the settlement pattern of the toumba, or by the toumba's separation from the flat settlement, as was the case at Sesklo. Going even further, Halstead (*1999*, 91) stated that "This competition between households lies behind the formation of monumental tell villages, with their ostentatious emphasis on household antecedents, and the maintenance of regional societies with a shared material culture expressed particularly in those elements that symbolized the household and extra-household hospitality".

Specifically as regards Sesklo, we believe that one should also examine in detail the reasons cited here for the formation e.g. of the entirety of the fill at Dikili Tash, and for the fact that at Sesklo A and B there was no unified Dimini horizon for the period for which we are primarily claiming the existence of the phenomenon of extensive settlements, gatherings of populations, etc. This phenomenon could be considered to obtain in certain cases for MNIII as well, on the basis of Stavroupoli I and the more recent excavations at Mesimeriani (*Grammenos D., Kotsos S., 2002,* Addendum). The unit of the "household" is in fact a useful theoretical concept for dealing with issues involving social, economic, and other topics in the Neolithic era. However, we believe that this concept needs to be connected to the question of relations between toumba and flat settlement. The gradual transformation from Neolithic to Early Bronze Age constantly sought in the research could also be sought in other sectors, e.g. in burials, as has been stressed (*Kotsakis K., 1999*). It is also indicative that the enormous Neolithic settlement of Stavroupoli displays complete homogeneity in distribution of every type of excavation data, displaying not so much as the initial phase of any transformation, apart perhaps from the remains of a stone wall belonging to the Stavroupoli II phase (Oraiokastro 104).

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Fig. 1: Pit belonging to House A. At left, oven and secondary pit (Oraiokastro 98)

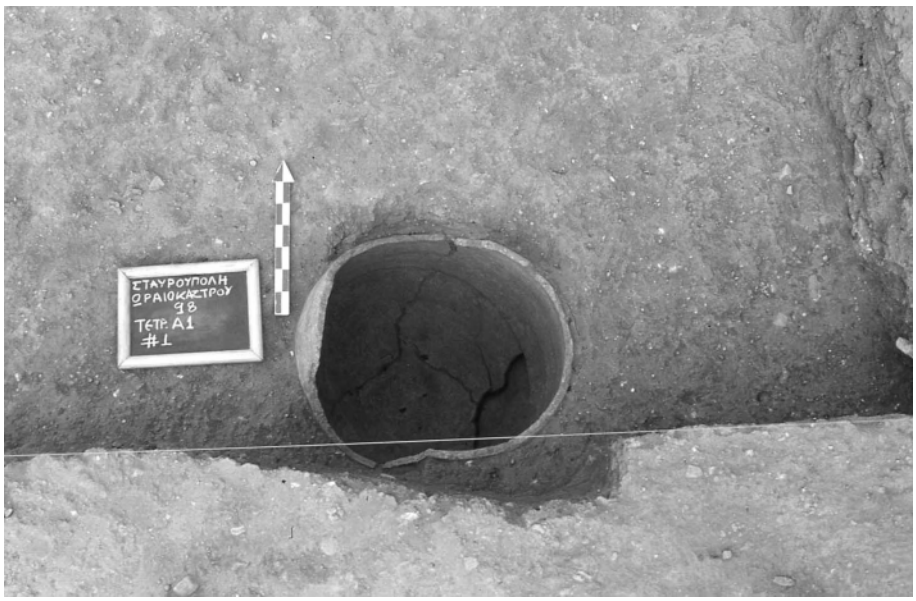


Fig. 2: Storage pithos found in the area of House A (Oraiokastro 98)

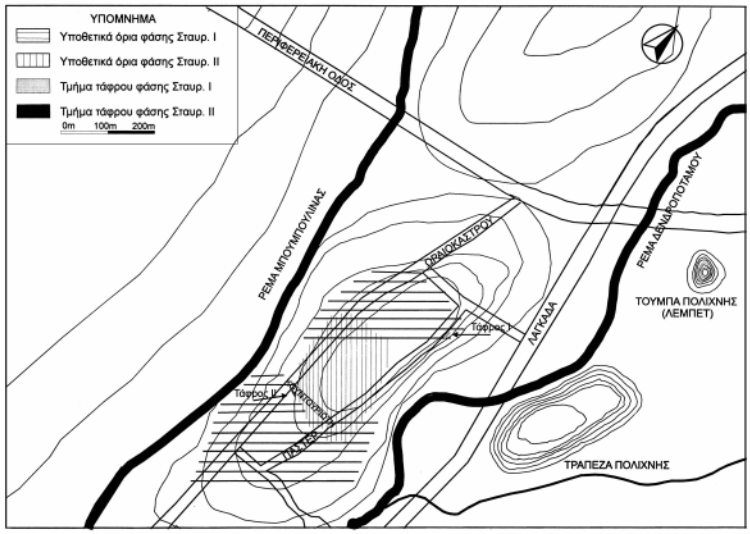
Fig. 3: Lay-out of the excavation of Dagli 14, showing the remains of the house in the central squares

Fig. 4: Portion of the floor and part of a stone base from a wall block (Dagli 14)

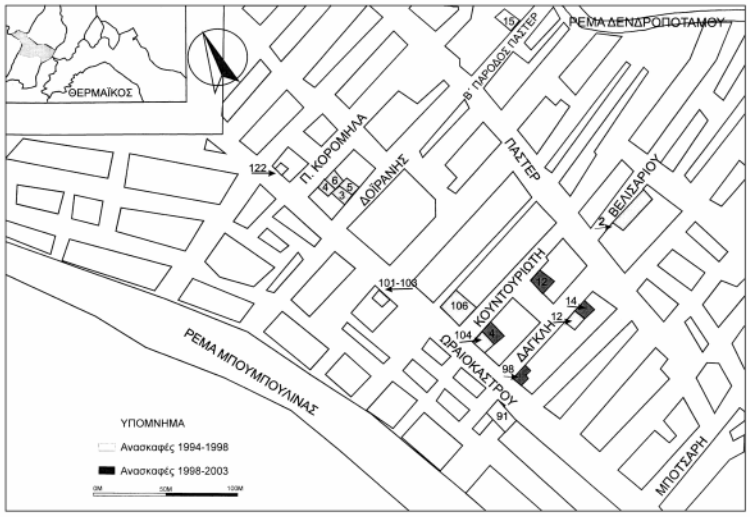
Fig. 5: Stone-covered space (Kountourioti 6)

Fig. 6: Part of ditch A (Kountourioti 6)

Fig. 7: Section of a stone wall (Kountourioti 6)



Drawing 1: Plan of the wider area of the Neolithic settlement of Stavroupoli, showing the position of the toumba and trapeza of Polichni (Lebet)



Drawing 2. Plan of the zoned area of the Neolithic settlement, showing the locations of excavated plots