

## Foreword

This publication has been conceived as a comprehensive guide to the archaeology and excavation history of the site of Thorikos, and at the same time a presentation of ongoing work and a preview of new undertakings – a mission statement of sorts for the five-year fieldwork project currently under way (2018–2022). Growing out of a strictly Belgian initiative led by the universities of Ghent and Liège, the Thorikos Project has become a truly international research program, involving more than 40 scholars affiliated to 12 universities and other institutions, as well as countless students and volunteers. Rather than having one or two authors covering the many aspects of this complex site and its exploration, we are therefore happy to have the specialists themselves present their work in a multi-authored collection of texts, highlighting both the coherence of the project and the collaborative spirit that underlies it. The resulting book is intended for the general, interested public as well as for specialists.

The monograph written by the project's previous director Herman Mussche in 1998 remains indispensable for a more in-depth account of the archaeology of Thorikos before c. 1990, but previous general guides to the site date to the -70s and -80s of the last century and are both out of print and outdated at this point (Mussche 1974; 1978; 1986). In the years since, the site has been briefly treated in a guide to the Lavreotiki and the Lavrion Museum published by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (Salliora-Oikonomakou 2007) and in a book accompanying an exhibition held at the Numismatic Museum of Athens (Iossif, ed. 2010). A local publication has also been dedicated to the ancient theatre at Thorikos and its partial restoration (Dermatis and Manthos 2010). For other relevant and scholarly literature, the academic readership will find an extensive reference section at the end of this book.

We are sincerely grateful to the contributing authors for agreeing to participate in this venture so swiftly, and to Victor Martínez Hahn Müller for taking on the layout in the same enthusiastic manner. Many preliminary and comprehensive publications on both old and recent fieldwork are currently in advanced stages of preparation, and it is hoped that the spirit of rapid publication informing the present book will have a favourable influence on the scholarly venues as well.

Roald F. Docter and Maud Webster, 30 November 2018



*View of the Velatouri hill with surroundings seen from the west, the island of Makronisos in the background (Thorikos archive).*

## **1. Introduction: Thorikos Through Time**

The site of Thorikos occupies the coastal northeast of the Lavrion area or Lavreotiki, a metalliferous region of Attica, Greece. The ancient town or deme comprised three areas: a double-bay harbour by the Aghios Nikolaos peninsula, the Adami plain with the lower reaches of the Potami valley, and the double-peaked Velatouri hill, c. 144 m asl, which has seen human activity since the Final Neolithic period (c. 4100-3100 BC). The Velatouri is also the focus for the archaeological research briefly surveyed here, and presented more fully in the following sections.

The presence of a defensible hill, a viable seaport and a valley plain were all sufficient reasons for human settlement here, but there was more to Thorikos than this: its bedrock consists of layered marble and mica-schist bearing lead ores rich in silver. Mining began on the Velatouri in the Final Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, probably around 3200 BC. From the Middle and Late Helladic periods of the Bronze Age (c. 2000-1050 BC), architectural remains are extant as well as pottery and stone tools, and several significant tombs have been explored,

one of which is a monumental *tholos* or beehive-shaped, dry-laid masonry tomb – a rare Attic example of the elite tradition known as Mycenaean. From the Iron Age, the remains unearthed so far consist mainly of graves, buildings and pottery, some of which features the characteristic decoration which gives its name to the so-called Geometric period. The subsequent Archaic period has left little behind in terms of architectural or metallurgical data, but a considerable number of tombs are extant from this time, and the pottery repertory is rich and variegated.

In the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, a stone theatre was built at Thorikos, and its approximate date of construction makes it one of the oldest known in the ancient world. It has an unusual, elliptical-angular shape and, like the deme of which it became an integral part, it was altered over time – monumentalized before the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC), enlarged afterwards, and associated to assembly halls and a small temple for Dionysos. Overall, the complex archaeological record encountered at Thorikos reflects, in particular, intensified activities during the Classical period: in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, this became a remarkably multifaceted town where houses, graves, roads and shrines were juxtaposed to industrial installations such as mines, ore washeries, cisterns and towers. Sacred features, aside from the several cemeteries, include a shrine in *Insula* 10 and a hill terrace with carved sockets for *stelai* uprights – perhaps votive, perhaps funerary. Ore furnaces, however, were located off-site, near the harbour and in the hinterland. In the Adami plain, a monumental Doric stoa was built, perhaps as part of a sanctuary for Demeter. This *floruit* can be related generally to an increased use of silver (coin). The mines were owned by the Athenian state, and concessions for their exploitation were leased to entrepreneurs with workforces consisting of slaves and labourers, many of whom came to live on-site.

Less archaeological data has so far come from the Hellenistic period, and an important coin hoard stashed in a house in the urban area around 295 BC is commonly taken to signal an abandonment, connected to the Macedonian presence in Attica. This impression is tempered, however, by a fair amount of Hellenistic pottery and evidence of contemporary activity in some mines. In the early Roman imperial period, Thorikos was probably only sparsely occupied, but there was a new surge including prospecting and probably habitation in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, before the vivacious settlement around the Velatouri fell silent.

It came to life again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, when mining was resumed – and archaeological interest took hold.

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References: Mussche 1998; Salliora-Oikonomakou 2007.

## 2. A History of Archaeology at Thorikos

Several topographical studies were undertaken in the Lavreotiki in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, and the outstanding features of Thorikos were explored: the stoa in the Adami plain by French architect J.D. Le Roy in 1754, the British Society of Dilettanti in 1813 and the Greek Archaeological Service in 1893; the theatre by the American School of Classical Studies in the 1880s, and Mycenaean tombs III and IV and their surroundings by Valerios Staïs for the Greek Archaeological Service in 1888-93. The Aghios Nikolaos harbour (and more) was documented by German scholars Arthur Milchhöfer and Johann Kaupert.

The harbour was also the starting point for the more recent history of archaeology here, beginning in 1960 with Herman Mussche. Between 1963 and 1989, he directed 23 campaigns at Thorikos for the Committee for Belgian

*Exploration of the stoa in the Adami plain in the 1890s  
(photo: courtesy of DAI Athen, No. D-DAI-ATH-Attika-0011).*



excavations in Greece. The work, co-directed by Jean Servais, Guy Donnay, Tony Hackens, Paule Spitaels and Doris Vanhove, included re-examinations of the stoa (long thought to represent a temple), the theatre and the Mycenaean tombs, as well as extensive excavation of the urban area on the Velatouri and its manifold installations – the so-called Industrial Quarter. There followed two decades of intermittent surveys and soundings, and organization of the growing database; meanwhile, the stoa was excavated by Vasileios Petrakos and Maria Oikonomakou for the Greek Archaeological Service.

In 2004, new fieldwork by the Belgian School at Athens began with Robert Laffineur of Liège University and in 2006 with Roald F. Docter of Ghent University, initiatives which expanded into a multicollegial, interdisciplinary project under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Ephorate of Antiquities of East Attica. In 2010-12, industrial cistern no. 1 was excavated, and in 2012-17, a surface survey of the Velatouri was carried out by the universities of Ghent and Utrecht (Roald F. Docter and Floris van den Eijnde), while Denis Morin and his team from the University of Lorraine further explored the mines.

In 2018, new excavations began under the direction of Docter and van den Eijnde, and a survey of the northern part of the Velatouri was undertaken by Laffineur and Sylviane Déderix of Heidelberg University. Andreas Kapetanios of the Ionian University and Roald F. Docter are currently re-assessing the theatre excavation results for comprehensive publication, and Johannes Bergemann and his team from Göttingen University are preparing the results from House 5 in the Industrial Quarter. A range of other contexts and assemblages is also under study and below, members of the international team present themes of current interest and aspects of their recent work.

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References: Le Roy 1758, I: 3-4; The Society of Dilettanti 1817/1833; Staïs 1893 and 1895; Miller 1885-86; Cushing 1885-86; Curtius and Kaupert 1887/1895-1903; Mussche 1961 and 1998; *Thorikos I-XI*; Miles 2015; Petrakos 1995; 1996; 1997; 1998.

