The ancient settlement in the Anchialos-Sindos double trapeza
Seven years (1990-1996) of archaeological research

Michalis A. Tiverios
An ancient settlement known to archaeologists and historians as the “Double Trapeza” of Anchialos is located near modern Sindos, about 23 kilometres west of Thessaloniki in the area of Industrial Zone B (fig. 1). This “double trapeza” dominates the entire surrounding area (fig. 2); according to Rey, at the beginning of this century it measured 20 metres at its highest point and 300 metres at its widest (fig. 3). The site became known in the early 1980s, when Aik. Despini discovered there a cemetery of great importance. Dated to the archaic and classical period, the graves are distinguished for their wealth of artifacts, now on display in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.

The investigation of the ancient settlement began in 1990, and since then different sections have been excavated on both the upper and the lower trapeza. The excavation of the first trench, dug at the point designated “A” on the upper trapeza, was completed during the last excavating period. The trench, measuring 2x4 metres, reached a depth of about 16 m below surface level, providing for the most part undisturbed stratigraphy. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the excavation data from this pit have supplied us with a fairly complete outline of the history of this ancient settlement. On an elevation formed by a thick layer of sand (which we began to encounter at a depth of about 12 m) we found traces of the first human settlement. According to geologist K. Albanakis, this layer must have been laid down millions of years ago – even before the formation of the Thermaikos Gulf-by fluvial deposits which were subsequently covered by the waters of a lake. This first settlement, which dates to the Late Bronze Age (13th-12th c. BC), was built on a stratum formed by alluvial deposits containing sherds of vessels from the Late Neolithic and the Late Bronze Age. Several successive settlements were found above this stratum. The most recent of these dates to the early 5th c. BC, and was revealed on the very first day of our excavation. Surface remains indicate phases later than the 5th c. BC, which have apparently been...
lost. These however cannot have been important. Although our pit was not large, the finds, both in buildings and in movable artifacts, were significant. A two-storey horseshoe-shaped oven was discovered on a terrace. The Late Mycenaean pottery found there dates the oven to the 12th-11th c. BC. Architectural remains from different phases (mainly walls constructed of courses of bricks, with the exception of the most recent phase, where the lower courses were of stone), remains of a 9th c. BC copper-workshop, oval hearths with brick spit stands dating to about 800 BC, an 8th c. BC cellar with pithoi and a 6th c. BC workshop with a roof of wattle and daub, were some of the findings in this section. Among the smaller artifacts should be mentioned a rare clay figurine with its head in the shape of a bird (800 ca. BC), and the pottery, both local and imported. Imported pottery in the deeper strata was rare. A grey, thrown pottery was found in the strata of the Late Bronze Age and the Protogeometric and Geometric periods. This pottery, found in many sites around the Eastern Mediterranean, was probably made in northwestern Asia Minor, most likely in Troy. Imported geometric pottery appears from the 8th century on. A stratum dating from approximately 700 BC yielded marked traces of fire and large numbers of sherds, many of which were subsequently put together again to reconstitute entire vessels, of both local and imported ware. What we had here, then, was evidence of a violent catastrophe. Equally abundant in this excavation were the vegetal finds now being studied by M. Mangafa charred seeds of grapes, cereals (including barley, oats, millet and various types of wheat) and legumes (including broad beans, lentils and chick peas). The fact that products and by-products of several of these foods were found in every stage of processing would suggest that many of these items were cultivated by the inhabitants of the settlement themselves. The extraordinary quantity of shells of various types found throughout the double trapeza indicates that shellfish must have been (in addition to grains, legumes, vegetables and meat) one of the villagers’ primary foodstuffs: in ancient times, of course, this was a coastal village.
During the excavating periods of 1991 and 1992 we investigated another area of the upper trapeza: Site B\textsuperscript{18}. Here we discovered a vast archaic cellar\textsuperscript{19} and a monumental terrace dating to the so-called Iron Age (probably 7th c. BC). The height of this terrace, at some points at least, exceeded 4 metres\textsuperscript{20}. It was built up of layers of clean yellow clay, here and there reinforced with brick walls, isolated courses of bricks, thin layers of fine gravel and irregularly placed tree trunks.
Our excavation of the lower trapeza began in 1992. Here, in addition to several “rubbish pits”, we found significant remains of buildings from the Geometric period (figs. 4, 5). The structures unearthed included terraces, various household areas with
workshop and cooking installations complete with ovens (fig. 6) and Π-shaped or square fireplaces. These areas were separated by brick walls: a section of one of these (thickness about 60 cm) has at remained standing to a height of nearly 80 cm, with ten courses of bricks. It obviously belonged to a housing block, with walls running north-south and east-west, containing a number of rooms whose disposition and size will be studied in subsequent excavation periods. An early phase of this block, seemingly centred around a large square room, was apparently destroyed in some violent convulsion. This is indicated by the large quantities of potsherds found in at least two spots and in strata containing marked traces of fire. These fragments have been fitted together to reconstitute whole vessels, of both local and imported ware, in a variety of shapes: krater-shaped skyphoi (fig. 7), oinochoai with cut-away necks, cups and stamnos-like pyxides, probably from the late Geometric period. It is worth noting that the vessels were broken before the fire took hold. Among the “rubbish pits” discovered in the lower trapeza I shall mention only two. The larger, found at site Γ, has a maximum diameter of approximately 1.80 m and has been explored to a depth of about 5 trapeza, by contrast, remained largely as it was and, as our excavations have shown, was thenceforth mainly used as a rubbish pit\textsuperscript{22}.

Fig. 11. Potsherds of imported geometric pottery.

The circumscription around the year 700 BC of the area occupied by the settlement does not mean that it was declining: this is confirmed by the rich finds from the 6th and 5th centuries brought to light by Aik. Despini during her excavation of the ancient cemetery\textsuperscript{23}. That there were workshops modelling figurines in the 5th century has been shown by the discovery of moulds used for this purpose, while the kilns discovered and published by Mrs. Despini and used for the production of vessels, figurines and loom weights date from the 4th century BC\textsuperscript{24}. It was not until the end of the 4th century BC that the settlement began to show marked signs of decline, and there can be no doubt that this was associated with the founding of Cassander’s new city of Thessaloniki. There may also be a connection with “rubbish pit” Γ, which appears to have been filled at about this time. The settlement was most probably one of the 26 “towns in the land of Crousis and the Thermaikos” whose people Cassander forcibly relocated in his new city\textsuperscript{25}. Although, as we have seen, artifacts from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods do, despite their paucity, prove that the town continued to exist, it seems never to have regained any importance, and this is undoubtedly the result of the founding and growth of the neighbouring city of Thessaloniki.
The identity of the town on the double trapeza it not known with certainty. It must have been a place of considerable importance, engaging in trade with many parts of the ancient world throughout the Geometric, Archaic and Classical periods.

One notable feature is the large number of fragments of pointed amphorae from the Archaic and Classical periods, attesting to the people's predilection for Chian wine - not neglecting of course other celebrated wines of antiquity, from for example Thasos, Corinth, Lesbos and Mende. There is also firm evidence that they imported oil from Attica and Sa-mos. Further, the fine quality imported pottery found here indicates relations, direct or indirect, with Euboea, Thessaly, Corinth, Attica, Boeotia, Eastern Greece and the islands of the Aegean, and Egypt. Of the various ancient cities identified at different periods with this area, such as for example Chalastra, Sindos and Strepsa, most scholars seem to prefer Chalastra. I, however, as I have argued in the past, believe ancient Chalastra to have been located on the archaeological site near the present-day villages of Aghios Athanasios and Gephyra. The size of this site, which is the largest in the entire region to the west of Thessaloniki, the importance of the artifacts and ruins found there, and its position in relation to the Axios river all agree with what we know of ancient Chalastra from written sources, which describe it as a coastal city, the westernmost of ancient Mygdonia, the most important “city” in the region, and as located “on the river Axios”. This further agrees with Strabo’s account, when he says that the Axios flowed between Chalastra and Therme. If Chalastra had occupied the site we are currently studying, then in Strabo’s day the Axios would have to have followed a course to the east of it. This however seems never to have been the case, at least not within the so-called historic period. One further point: according to Hecataeus, Chalastra was a “city of Thracians”; now, the results to date of our excavations in the archaeological site at Sindos, with the marked presence of imported geometric and archaic pottery from southern and eastern Greece, indicate that what we have here was a city that accorded better with another phrase used by the same author, to describe Therme a “city of Greek Thracians”. I would add that the vast majority of the names recorded (dipinti or graffiti) on the pottery found in our excavations is Greek: Agathonios (fig. 12), Iao-Ian, Eudicus, Menestratos (or Menestor), while only one – Borys – may possibly be of Scythian origin. In view of all this, then, the Sindos archaeological site must surely have been occupied by some other town: for example, ancient Sindos.
The limited extent of our excavations to date precludes any attempt to answer a number of other important questions, such as when the ethnic composition of the settlement changed, when the Macedonians crossed the Axios and occupied the settlement, or when the Paeonians, Mygdonians or Edones lived in this area and whether any of the types of pottery found in the ancient settlement at Sindos may be associated with any of these tribes. Could some of the catastrophes identified in these excavations have been connected with warfare, associated with the arrival in the area of, for example, the Edones, or even the Macedonians, who must have crossed the Axios before the reign of Alexander I (early 5th century BC)? If this is the case, then Strabo’s reference to the Paeonian capital of Amydon, situated – like the town we have been studying – «where the Axios runs bread»³³, having A been «razed by the Argeads»³⁴ becomes even more interesting. The Paeonians (who, as we remember from the Iliad, took part in the Trojan Wars as allies of Priam) had been living «by the river Axios»³⁵ at least since the age of Homer.

APPENDIXES
Additional abbreviations


NOTES

3. In these seven years of excavation the work was carried out under the supervision (principally) of E. Mylonidou, Aik. Chrys-santhaki and K. Kathariou. During 1995 the work was carried out by K. Kathariou, K. Lachanidou and M. Oettli. The two latter, with the assistance of K. Kaitaridis, carried out the project during the year 1996. For the names of all the graduate and undergraduate students who took part in the excavations through 1993, see Τιβέριος 1990, p. 316 note 3; 1991, p. 235 note 2; 1992, p. 357 note 1, idem in press.
5. Τιβέριος in press.
7. Τιβέριος 1992, pp. 357 ff., 366 fig. 1 and 1991-1992, pp. 211, 223 fig. 2. For the Late Mycenaean pottery found here see also Τιβέριος 1993, pp. 553 ff., fig. 1 (the two on the upper left).
12. For imported pottery found in the excavation see Τιβέριος 1993, pp. 553 ff.
15. Τιβέριος 1990, pp. 320-321, 328 fig. 5.
17. Τιβέριος 1990, p. 319 and note 11. For the formation of the Thermaikos Gulf see also L. Eumorphopulos, Geographica Helvetica 18, 1963, pp. 269 ff. T. A. Astaras - L. Sotiriadis, The evolution of the Thessaloniki-Giannitsa plain in northern Greece during the last 2500 years from

22. Τιβέριος 1992, pp. 361 ff., Τιβέριος in press. "Rubbish" pits in the lower trapeza were also found during the course of excavations in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

24. See e. g. Τιβέριος 1991-1992, p. 217 with bibliography and 231 fig. 18.
30. Baba 1990, p. 2, identifies this site with either ancient Sindos or ancient Chalastra.
31. See also Baba 1990, esp. pp. 14 ff.
33. Iliad, ΙΙ 849 and XVΙ 288.