

Zakynthos Archaeology Project 2010 Summary report

Within the framework of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project, the fieldwork of 2010 was carried out in two campaigns: one week from 26 April-1 May and five weeks during the summer campaign from 14 June to 16 July. In addition, preliminary study of ceramics was carried out in October. The week in April served to prepare ourselves for the survey in research area C and for systematic study of the lithic artifacts collected during previous campaigns.

The 2010 campaign was scheduled to be the last campaign of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project. The previous winter, it had become clear that, even though we did have the support of the 35th Ephorate for Prehistoric and Classical Archaeology, the landowners at Lithakia-Kameroti (area A) would not agree to test trenches at the site explored in 2009. Scheduled geological research in cooperation with the Greek Institute for Geological and Mineralogical Research (IGME) in the central plain of Zakynthos could not take place due to contradictions in the necessary permits. The participants of ZAP 2010 focused on the intensive archaeological survey in research area C, near Vasilikos; on intensive survey of some tracts in research areas A and B, which remained from previous seasons; on ground reconnaissance on the basis of historical aerial photographs in area C and on a re-visit programme in area C that served to evaluate the methodology. In total, 27 persons participated in the project this year, from various Dutch and Greek institutions.¹ The majority of the participants were involved in field walking for the intensive archaeological survey and in the find processing within the Venetian castle of Zakynthos.

The methodology of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project is based on a comparison of the distribution of archaeological material between three different parts of the island. The campaign of 2010 focused on our research area C, which had previously been visited during 2006. In 2010, the survey tried to connect the transects from 2006, thus creating a large zone that is covered by field-walking (fig. 1). Unfortunately, many fields were inaccessible due to fencing and modern construction, making full coverage impossible.

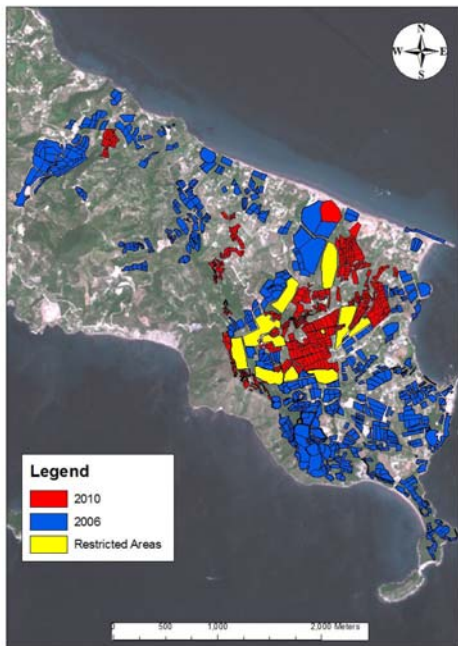
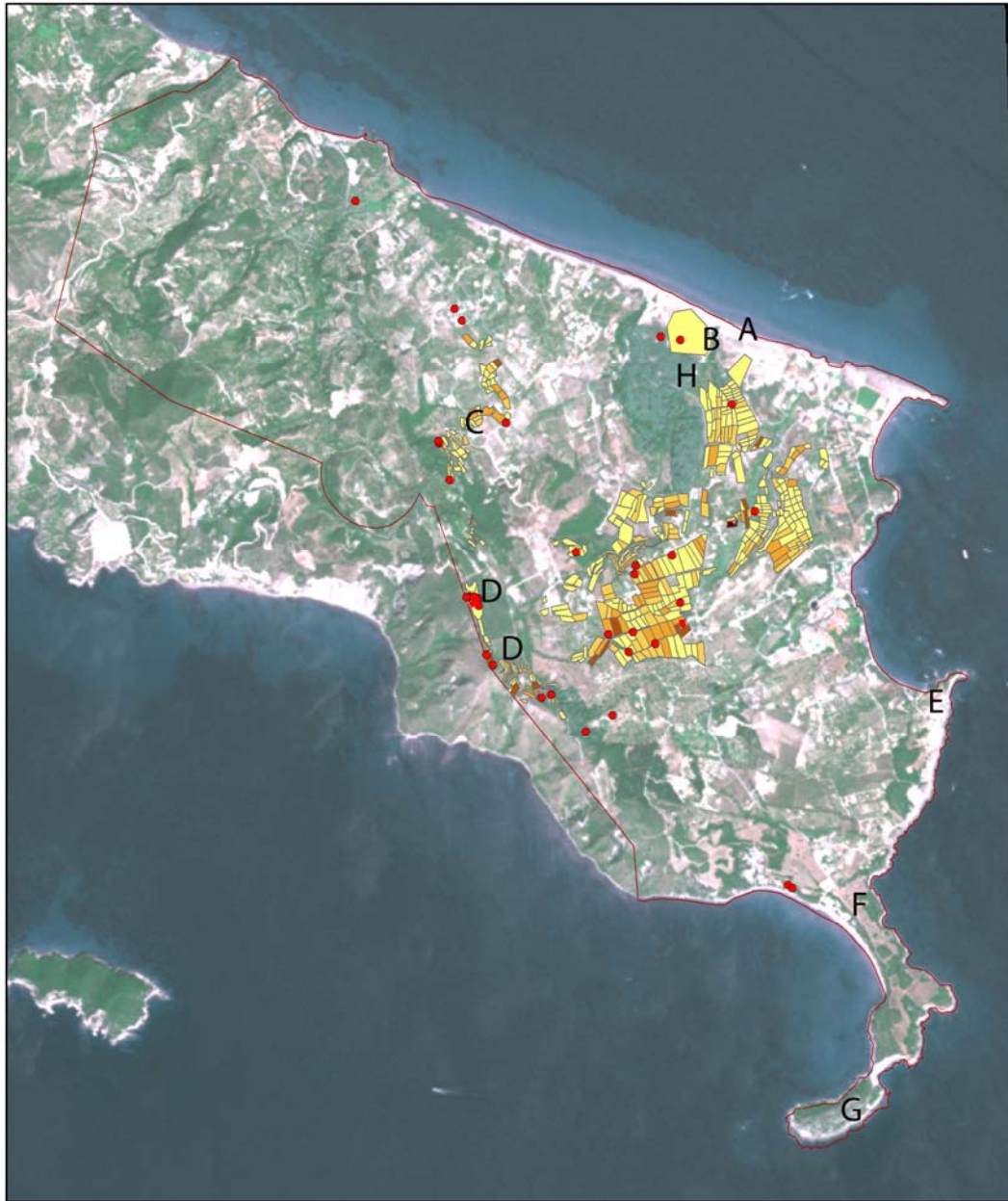


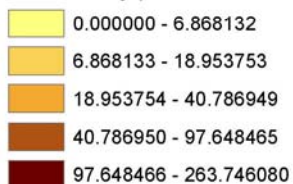
Figure 1. The 2010 survey tracts (red) in relation to the 2006 survey tracts (blue)

During the archaeological field survey 564 tracts were covered by field walking by the archaeological survey team. The main zone of survey is situated to the west of Cape Aghios Nikolaos, where lithic objects had been collected by various researchers in the past and by the Zakynthos project during 2006. The coastal part of this area consists of sandstone plateau's, which are now being developed for tourist infrastructure. Inland, the plain is covered with olive groves and scattered habitation until, in the southwest, there is a steep ascent to the hilly ridge which delineates the whole plateau of the research area.



Summer Survey 2001 - 2499, 2701 - 3000

Click density (total clicks / area covered sq.m)



Zakynthos Archaeology Project 2010

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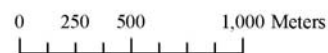


Figure 2. Density map of surveyed tracts in 2010

In 2006, we had found many fragments of a large prehistoric vessel buried in the sand on a slope just above the beach to the northwest of Cape Aghios Nikolaos, in the area marked with A in figure 2. The discovery was made by chance after disturbances in the area by machine works. During the April season of 2010, the find spot and its surroundings were revisited, showing that the landscape was substantially being altered to suit touristic development. A road cut near the point marked with B in figure 2, showed a profile with numerous exposed pottery fragments (figure 3). The sherds, of which some were decorated (fig. 4), are clearly of prehistoric (probably Early Helladic) date. Even though all sherds are of the same fabric, more than one vessel appears to have been present. Whether we are dealing with an eroded settlement layer or with another case of buried ceramics is at this point impossible to say. The hill above these remains was systematically investigated by field walking during the summer campaign. Access was difficult because of touristic development and fences and very few ceramics finds were made on the surface, but a substantial amount of lithic artifacts were collected.



Figure 3: Ceramic fragments in situ.



Figure 4: Decorated prehistoric fragments

The fields in the plain behind the sandstone ridge, which constitutes the coast in this area, yielded very few finds, although lithic artifacts were widely distributed in small numbers. Occasionally, worn fragments of ancient ceramics were found as well. A vague, but marked concentration of ancient pottery was attested somewhat to the northwest in the area marked with C in figure 2. Several fields in this area, in the foothills of the hilly ridge, yielded very worn pottery fragments, many of which have been tentatively assigned as BA? (= perhaps Bronze Age). From the same fields came pottery fragments, which have been tentatively labelled as Classical-Hellenistic. The specific chronology and nature of the human presence in this area needs further assessment.

Doretetes

Archaeological surface finds were somewhat more abundant in the hills in the west of the research area. The team conducting reconnaissance on the basis of aerial photographs, documented various features associated with prehistoric material on the wooded slopes of the hills overlooking the plain of Vasilikos. A notable concentration of ancient materials was attested at the hill of Doretetes, in the area marked with D in figure 2. The finds were spread around the top of the hill, which consists of a high, rocky ridge and two plateaus. The site provides a majestic overview of the southern part of the island (fig. 5) and all major sites investigated previously during the Zakynthos Archaeology Project are visible from here. At the northern plateau (tracts 2189-2193) vegetation was very dense and find numbers were not very high. Nevertheless, among the finds were a very high proportion of prehistoric finds and a few lithic artifacts. Moreover, several walls of undressed fieldstones, admittedly of uncertain date as yet, were visible below the vegetation.



Figure 5: the southern plateau (tract 2200-2201) of Doretetes hill

The southern plateau had been ploughed in recent years and olive trees had been planted. The fields on this plateau yielded a very high number of finds (fig. 6). Most of this material was clearly prehistoric and it has tentatively been assigned to the EH-MH periods. Some pottery of probable later date was present as well, notably some fine wares that may belong to the Mycenaean period.



Figure 6: Finds from Doretas photographed in the field.

The concentration at Vasilikos-Doretas clearly represents a prehistoric site. Due to thick vegetation, many fields surrounding the site could not be systematically investigated. However, extensive visits to these fields (so-called walk-overs) and the reconnaissance visits on the basis of information from aerial and satellite imagery showed that prehistoric material is present at various spots around the site. It is of interest that the finds of Doretas overlap chronologically with those of Vasilikos Kalogeros, the site near E in figure 2, where Bronze Age materials were found by during the 2005-2006 campaigns and by S. Benton in the 1930's. The two sites are in clear sight of each other and together they include a good harbour (Kalogeros), a defensive hill (Doretas) and suitable agricultural land (in between).



Figure 7: the Mycenaean tholos tomb near Triodi beach.

Mycenaean tomb

During the April campaign we visited an area near a popular beach, which was inaccessible for survey during the 2006 campaign. On the slopes of an eroding sandstone ridge, the team encountered a very weathered round structure (fig. 7), around which fragments of fine pottery were scattered. In all probability, these were the remains of a small Mycenaean tholos tomb, which is mentioned by several authors, but which we had been unable to locate. N. Papadatos, for many years working in the Zakynthos museum, confirmed our ideas and informed us that in the 1970's some basic restoring works aimed at stopping the erosion had been done. Nevertheless, the structure is nowadays very much in decay and hardly recognizable. During the summer campaign we were able to document the structure in some detail. It is roughly 3.50 m. in diameter and situated on a steep slope, which is subject to severe marine erosion. Pottery and bone fragments were collected, confirming a Mycenaean date for the tomb.

During the April campaign we were able to survey the tip of the Gerakas peninsula (G in figure 2), which is inaccessible during the summer months. In 2006 we had identified a built structure, which resembles the Mycenaean tomb of Keri somewhat. The tip of the peninsula is nowadays very difficult to access and heavily overgrown with vegetation. Clear signs of intensive early modern quarrying are visible. Unfortunately, no finds were made that could be associated with the built structure and its date of construction or purpose remain unclear. Elsewhere on the islet, an abandoned church and a large house with multiple rooms were visible. The pottery collected on the surface, appeared mostly to date from (pre) modern periods. However, a few lithic artifacts were collected as well.

Lithics

As in the 2006, the survey team collected substantial quantities of lithic artifacts: about 15% of the number of finds kept, are lithics. The lithic material in the area of Vasilikos can immediately be distinguished from that in the other research areas of the project by its raw material: most of the lithic artifacts here are small pieces of pebble flint. Many tracts yielded small numbers of this material. A concentration of lithic artifacts, however, was attested in three unploughed olive groves in the centre of the research area (tracts 2419-2421), which yielded more than 30 lithic finds. The significance of this concentration still needs to be assessed.



Figure 8: Lithics protruding from a section along the central road of Vasilikos

The central road in our research area from Vasilikos to Porto Roma cuts through a slope where at various points reddish soils have become visible. At one point, marked with H in figure 2, lithic artifacts were protruding from a sections (figure 8), which have the potential of being *in situ*. These finds were collected and a systematic survey of the whole road was conducted, which did not yield additional material. It will be of interest to compare the material from the section to the surface material of Vasilikos.

Methodology

The first campaign of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project in 2006 concentrated on research area C. Since that season, the methodology of the intensive archaeology has been refined to suit the specific circumstances of Zakynthos. In addition, new recording equipment, such as hand-held computers and GPS, as well as more accurate satellite photographs have been introduced to the project. The return to research area C in 2010 enabled us to evaluate the methodology of the project and to assess the effect of long-term changes to the archaeological surface record of the research area.



Figure 9: vegetation differences at Tract ZAP06_3042 in 2010 (ZAP10_3010)

The revisit programme consisted of the systematic survey of 27 selected tracts from the 2006 season. These tracts were selected by several criteria, mostly landscape type, visibility and quantity and quality of finds. Since the defined tracts in the current are smaller than in 2006, a total of 74 tracts were included in the revisit programme. The results of the survey were evaluated with regard to location, land-use, accessibility, visibility and quantity and quality of the finds. It proved surprisingly difficult to accurately locate the 2006 tracts, even with the help of GPS coordinates and sketches. A number of fields had become inaccessible due to fencing and/or construction. In a few cases, visibility had changed significantly (fig. 9). Overall, however, there do not seem to be substantial differences in accessibility, land-use, visibility and find-densities. In addition, there do not appear to be substantial differences between 2006 and 2010 with regard to the presence of the basic find categories that we use for find processing. In general, it appears that the archaeological surface record of the area has not changed substantially during five years.

Melinado inscription

In 2007 and 2008, the survey of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project took place in research area B, near the town of Machairado. In the northern part of this research area, the church of Aghios Dhimitrios at Melinado constitutes a known archaeological site, where a votive inscription to

Artemis had been recorded on a marble block re-used as the altar of the church. After the destruction of the church, this block was moved to museum at Zakynthos town. Several 19th century travelers discuss the inscription, but an accurate drawing and transcription has never been published.



Figure 9: the inscription from Melinado

During the summer season of 2010, we had the permission and the possibility to locate the block in the Zakynthos museum and to document the inscription in detail. The research on the chronology and significance of the inscription will be published in *Pharos*, the periodical of the Netherlands Institute at Athens.

Preliminary conclusions

Preliminary results of the 2010 archaeological survey in research area C of the Zakynthos Archaeology Project are:

- In the coastal zone of “Banana” beach, there is evidence of prehistoric remains in the ground. However, the area is difficult to access and it is currently being developed for tourism
- There are a few unclear concentrations of ancient material of different periods in the plain behind the coast, which needs to be assessed further after more careful study of the finds.
- Lithic artifacts, predominantly from pebble flint, are widely distributed in the survey area. Two concentrations, one on the surface and another from a road section, have been identified.
- The hilly ridge which delineates the research area shows ample signs of prehistoric presence. These indications appear to be related to the site of Vasilikos-Doretos. Doretos constitutes an important Bronze Age site.
- The Mycenaean tomb “above Triodi beach” has been relocated and is subject to severe erosion.
- The nature of the built structure at the tip of Gerakas is still unknown.
- The inscription from Aghios Dhimitrios has been relocated and its chronology and significance is currently studied.

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