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FORTIFICATIONS OF MOUNT ONEION, CORINTHIA

ABSTRACT

Recent investigations on the Isthmus of Corinth by the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS) have revealed a series of relatively humble fortifications situated along the ridge of Mt. Oneion, which forms the southern boundary of the Isthmus. These Late Classical–Early Hellenistic walls, along with a nearby series of later Venetian fortifications, were designed to block access to the south through several low passes. Controlling the passage of northern armies through the Isthmus to the Peloponnese was clearly a long-term strategic concern for diverse regional powers.

The Isthmus of Corinth is one of the most strategically important regions in the eastern Mediterranean.[1] It lies at the junction of the main north–south roads between central Greece and the Peloponnese and the sea routes between the eastern and the western Mediterranean. The Corinthians, with their imposing citadel of Acrocorinth, traditionally controlled the Isthmus, which runs from the city's western port of Lechaion to its eastern port at Kenchreai (Fig. 1). At numerous times, however, a foreign power such as Rome or Venice has sought to dominate this strategically significant corridor.

The Isthmus is both a relatively fertile, flat agricultural area and the natural point of defense for the Peloponnese against any attack from the north.[2] Only 7 km wide at its narrowest point, the Isthmus is cut today by the Corinth Canal and was crossed in antiquity by the Diolkos road. It is

1. We would especially like to thank Daniel Pullen, codirector, and Thomas Tartaron, field director, of the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS). The 37th Ephoreia of Classical and Prehistoric Antiquities and the 4th Ephoreia of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities provided cooperation and encouragement at every step of this project. We would also like to thank Ronald Stroud, James Wiseman, and Merle Langdon for advice and for reading earlier drafts of the article. Thanks are also due to the anonymous *Hesperia* referees, who helped us avoid many errors and infelicities. Holly Cook prepared the pottery drawings, and Karen Soteriou prepared the plans of the Maritsa Venetian fortifications. Finally, special thanks are due to the many members of EKAS who trudged up and down the steep paths of Oneion in hot and sometimes dangerous situations, often carrying heavy equipment. This article is primarily the fruit of their labor.

2. Wiseman 1978, pp. 17–21, 52–56, 81–82; *Isthmia* V, pp. 7–10; Fowden 1995.

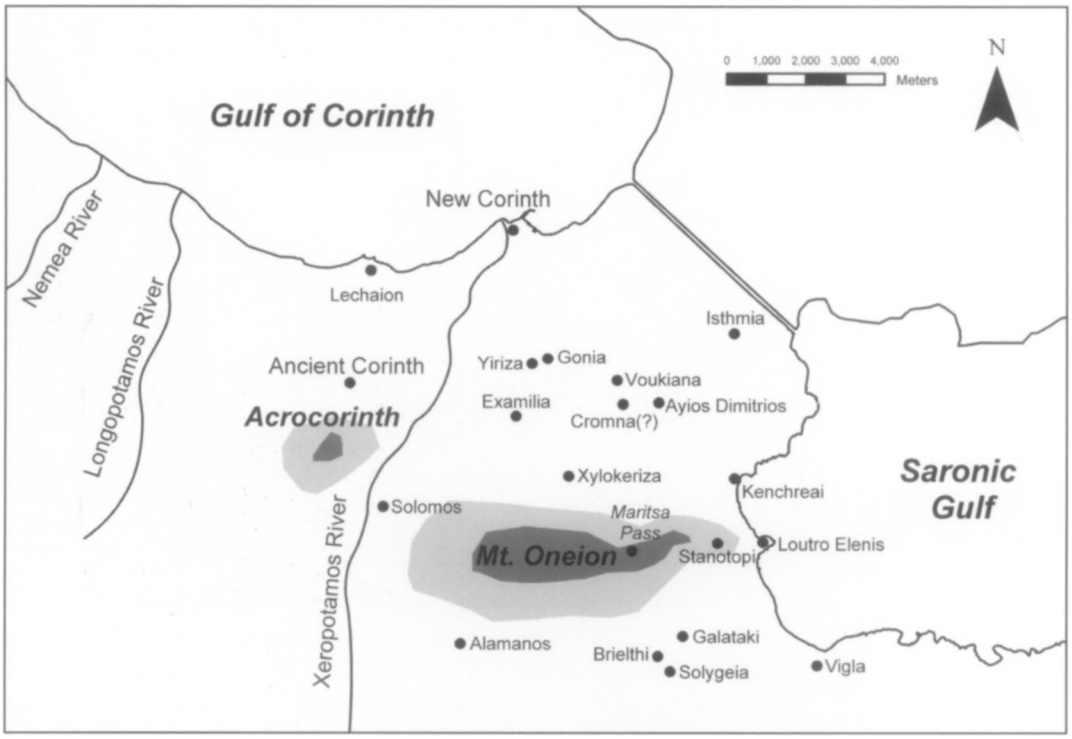

Figure 1. The Isthmus of Corinth, with sites mentioned in the text.
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one of a handful of natural places critical to the defense of Greece, along with the eastern pass of Thermopylai and the western passes of Kithairon-Parnes between Boiotia and the Attic-Megarid region.[3] Although these three areas have natural features that have made them easily defensible, all of them required complex systems of fortification to prevent the passage of an enemy. Here we seek to shed new light on the southernmost fortifications of the Isthmus corridor.

At the southern boundary of the Isthmian plain, the abrupt heights of Mt. Oneion provide a natural defensive line from Kenchreai to Acrocorinth (Figs. 1, 2). For an enemy approaching Mt. Oneion from the north, the sheer cliffs and steep slopes present a formidable barrier. To gain access to lands south of the mountain, it is possible to pass the Oneion barrier in a number of ways (Fig. 3). The easiest method is to go around it, either to the east or the west. The principal routes of both ancient and modern times skirt Mt. Oneion to the west, following the course of the Xeropotamos (Leukon) River or traversing the valleys of the Longopotamos (Rachiani) and Nemea (Koutsomadiotikos) rivers farther to the west.[4] The difficulty with these routes in the past was that they ran directly within the view of the powerful fortifications of Acrocorinth, often prompting an invading army to seek an alternative course.

To the east a route ran along the coast of the Saronic Gulf near the port of Kenchreai, just west of the modern coastal highway to Epidauros.[5] The disadvantage of this route was that it passed close to the fortifications of Kenchreai, and beyond these the road narrows between the sea to the east and the mass of Mt. Oneion to the west.[6] Here a small force could easily block an invader's progress to the south. An invader with control of

3. Fowden 1995, p. 550.

4. For the Xeropotamos, see Wiseman 1978, pp. 81, 88–90; Salmon 1983, p. 36. For the Nemea and Longopotamos rivers, see Pritchett 1969, pp. 77–79; Wiseman 1978, pp. 81, 108–110; Salmon 1983, pp. 36–37; Bynum 1995, pp. 40–45; Pikoulas 1995, pp. 31–35; Lolos 1998, pp. 129–132; Marchand 2002, pp. 40–72.

5. Stroud 1971a, p. 127. For the identification of wheel ruts presumably belonging to this road along a stretch of exposed bedrock on the beach north of Loutro Elenis, see *Kenchreai* I, p. 2; Salmon 1983, p. 37.

6. Pseudo-Skylax 54; *Kenchreai* I, pp. 6–12.

Figure 2. Mt. Oneion, looking south from the Isthmus. The Maritsa pass is just right of center. Photo T. E. Gregory

the sea would have found it easier to circumvent the defenses along the Saronic Gulf.[7]

When an invading army found the natural routes around the ends of Mt. Oneion blocked, it might attempt to cross the mountain directly. It is possible to do so through one of several north–south passes, including the Stanotopi and Maritsa passes, which are the particular focus of this article. To attempt either of these passes, located in the eastern part of the Oneion range, an attacking army must have had serious reasons to bypass the easier routes skirting its eastern and western ends. Not only are the mountain routes arduous, but they would place the attackers in a position well east of Corinth and outside the main routes to the Argolid. The most compelling reason for using these passes would have been that forces attempting to block the Isthmia corridor typically arrayed themselves at the eastern and western ends of the mountain, defending the easy passages and maintaining close contact with the resources and fortifications of Corinth and Kenchreai. An attempt to pass through the center of the mountain ridge, therefore, may have seemed preferable to meeting concentrated defenses on the Saronic coast or in the Xeropotamos valley.

There were other reasons for an invader to seek access to the area immediately south of Mt. Oneion and east of the traditional routes to the Argolid. Textual and archaeological evidence from the Classical period attests to the existence of an unfortified community at Solygeia in the rolling hills immediately south of Oneion (Fig. 1).[8] Archaeological finds have been reported near the town of Almyri and on the hills of Brielthi and Vigla. Moreover, in the course of geological work conducted by EKAS, scatters of ancient material in the fields to the west of the modern village of Rhyto were observed, indicating that the hills south of Solygeia, reached today by a road heading south from Galataki, may have had significant settlement in antiquity as well.[9] The presence of these apparently unfortified settlements within easy reach of the coast may have tempted an enemy either to forage

7. E.g., Diodoros (19.54.3) recorded that in 316 Kassander avoided a confrontation with the troops of Polyperchon, who held the Isthmus at that time, by transporting his men from Megara to Epidauros by sea; see Stroud 1971a, p. 142.

8. For Solygeia, see Thuc. 4.42–45; *Corinth* I.1, pp. 97–99; Stroud 1971b; 1994, pp. 269–280; Wiseman 1978, pp. 56–58. See Lorandou-Papantouniou 1999 for N. M. Verdelis's excavations in 1957–1958; for finds elsewhere, see Stroud 1971b, p. 238; Wiseman 1978, p. 58.

9. Tartaron et al., forthcoming.

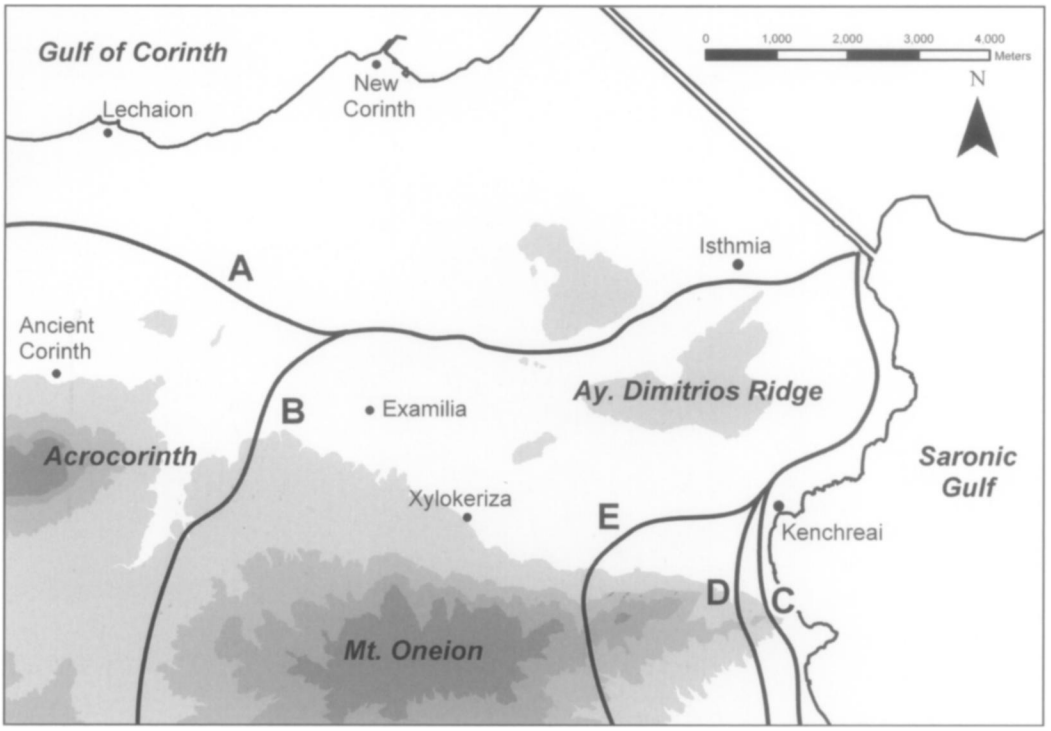

Figure 3. Routes south through the Isthmus: (A) the coastal route blocked during the Classical period by the long walls linking Corinth to its port of Lechaion; (B) the traditional route south following the Xeropotamos River; (C) the eastern coastal road passing to the east of Stanotopi; (D) the Stanotopi pass; (E) the Maritsa pass. W. R. Caraher

in their vicinity or to carry out destructive raids on vulnerable centers of rural agricultural production.

In addition, once an army crossed the mountain's eastern end and moved south, it had bypassed the defenses of Acrocorinth and gained access to a complex network of roads leading toward the population centers of the southwest Corinthia, such as Tenea, Kleonai, and Phlius, as well as the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea. Thereafter, an army could link up with routes into the Argolid or move toward the west through the uplands of the northeastern Peloponnese to descend into Sikyonia, Arkadia, and Achaia.[10] It also would have been possible for an invading army without substantial naval power to proceed south into the Epidauria, although there is little evidence for this actually occurring.[11] Furthermore, east–west routes passing immediately to the south of Mt. Oneion would have given an army relatively easy access to the city walls of Corinth in the vicinity of the southeast gate, allowing the invaders to attack Corinth from an unexpected direction.[12]

In this article, we discuss the archaeological evidence from the Stanotopi and Maritsa passes of Mt. Oneion and the attempts made to fortify them in at least two distinct periods. The Stanotopi pass runs just to the

10. Polyb. 4.13.1–6. The roads of the southwest Corinthia and the passes into the Argolid have been well studied: Stroud 1971a, p. 128; Bynum 1995, pp. 14–27; Pikoulas 1995, pp. 285–288; Lolos 1998, pp. 182–190. Walbank (1957, p. 461) proposed that the Aitolians may have followed a route from Sikyon to the eastern part of the Isthmus, avoiding Acrocorinth after the Battle of Kaphyai in 220 B.C.

11. Diod. Sic. 15.69.1; Dixon 2000, p. 94.

12. This is the route taken by Dodwell (1819, pp. 196–197). For the gate, see *Corinth* III.2, pp. 47–54.

west of the port of Kenchreai, and by traversing it, an enemy could skirt the eastern defenses of the Isthmus and descend into the plain to the south. Stroud has already discussed this passage in some detail.[13] The Maritsa pass is some 2 km farther west, between Kenchreai and the modern village of Xylokeriza, in an area locally called Maritsa or Trypeio Lithari. Scholars generally have not recognized this more difficult and remote pass; nevertheless, the remains of substantial fortifications designed to defend it suggest that it was perceived as a viable route south during the ancient and early modern periods.[14]

MAJOR LINES OF DEFENSE IN THE EASTERN CORINTHIA

Stroud observed that there have always been two lines of defense running through the Corinthia: a freestanding trans-Isthmian wall and the series of fortifications along Mt. Oneion.[15] The idea of a trans-Isthmian wall has long commanded the larger share of scholarly attention. Researchers have identified and seriously discussed no less than four trans-Isthmian fortifications, all of which were designed to take advantage of the series of upturned marine terraces extending northwest–southeast through the Isthmian plain.[16] Broneer sought to identify and trace a Mycenaean wall that ran from the beach south of the canal near the modern settlement of Isthmia to the neighborhood of the Sanctuary of Poseidon and presumably beyond.[17] Wiseman reported fortifications along the Ayios Dimitrios ridge (Fig. 3), arguing that pottery, loomweights, and the masonry itself might identify this wall with the fortifications constructed during the Persian Wars and mentioned in books 8 and 9 of Herodotos.[18] He also documented more thoroughly a wall of Hellenistic date that followed a similar line on the Ayios Dimitrios ridge.[19] Excavations on this ridge uncovered substantial remains of towers and what appear to have been barracks.[20] While there was no evidence of the Classical wall beyond the top of the ridge, Wiseman was able to trace the Hellenistic wall as it turned to the northwest and ultimately to the north toward the modern city of Corinth.

The final trans-Isthmian fortification, and certainly the most impressive today, is the Hexamilion, constructed in the early years of the 5th century A.D. and rebuilt on many occasions afterward. Its remains are still well preserved in many places, and they can be traced from the Saronic Gulf to the Corinthian Gulf.[21] This formidable fortification, despite periods of disrepair, served to block access to the Peloponnese for over 1,000 years. In fact, the last attempt to fortify the lower line of the Hexamilion was during the second period (1686–1715) of Venetian occupation of the Peloponnese, although the Venetian senate was evidently unable to provide the funds necessary for its proper repair and defense.[22]

The second line of defense serving to fortify the Isthmia corridor was farther south and took advantage of the Oneion range as a natural barrier against north–south movement.[23] The fortifications along this line left the plain of the Isthmus undefended and could not protect against an army that moved west to enter the Peloponnese through any of the north–south

13. Stroud 1971a.

14. This pass is not to be confused with the western pass noted by Stroud (1971a, pp. 129, 137).

15. Stroud 1971a, p. 127.

16. *Isthmia* V, pp. 4–6.

17. Broneer 1966; see also Kardara 1971; Wiseman 1978, p. 60.

18. Hdt. 8.71, 9.7.1; Wiseman 1978, p. 60; see also *Isthmia* V, p. 5.

19. Wiseman 1963; 1978, pp. 59–63. See alslo Lawrence 1979, p. 169; *Isthmia* V, p. 5, n. 35.

20. Wiseman 1963, pp. 255–256.

21. *Isthmia* V.

22. *Isthmia* V, pp. 150–151; Maltezou 1978. There was even talk of refortifying the Hexamilion at the time of the Greek War of Independence in the early 19th century.

23. Stroud 1971a. Wiseman (1978, p. 59, p. 77, n. 91) lists eight instances in which Oneion was fortified between 369 and 146 B.C.

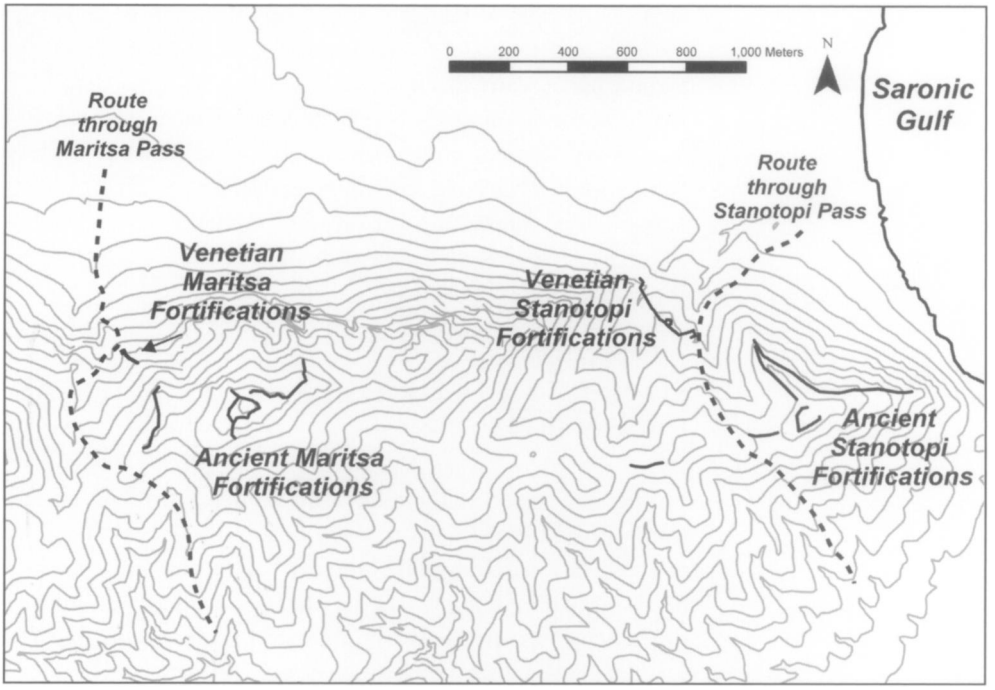

Figure 4. The eastern part of the Oneion ridge, with passes and fortifications. Contour interval 20 m. W. R. Caraher

river valleys. The Oneion fortifications were also less spectacular than the freestanding walls of the lower plain, and they were apparently erected and manned under less dramatic circumstances. They are associated with the Stanotopi and Maritsa passes (Fig. 4).

The Stanotopi pass runs between the principal mass of Mt. Oneion and its easternmost prominence, a hill called Stanotopi. This pass crosses the mountain at a comparatively low elevation, ca. 200 m. The main routes ascend the mountain from the flat land near Kenchreai and descend close to the modern town of Loutro Elenis. The best paths follow two converging ravines that cut into the north face of the mountain. These ravines begin ca. 150 m to the east of the entrance to a modern quarry (which at present consumes the eastern extent of the mountain) and 40 m to the south of the southern fence of a modern Greek army base. One route ascends the western side of the eastern ravine and the other, probably easier, passage runs just to the east. These paths provide access to the top of the Oneion ridge, which is under 250 m in elevation at this point, and from there an army could descend by numerous routes to the south.

The Maritsa pass runs across the center of the mountain ridge, ascending ca. 2.4 km west of Kenchreai and 2 km east of the village of Xylokeriza. The best modern path approaches a deep ravine from the east, crossing a broad alluvial fan. Ascent from the west would have involved a much steeper climb. The path from the east ascends sharply toward the east side of the ravine before crossing to the west side of a broad saddle that passes across the mountain at an elevation of slightly over 320 m. On the southern side of the saddle the path breaks to the east, crossing the saddle again, and descends south along the spines of any number of alluvial fans toward Galataki and ancient Solygeia.

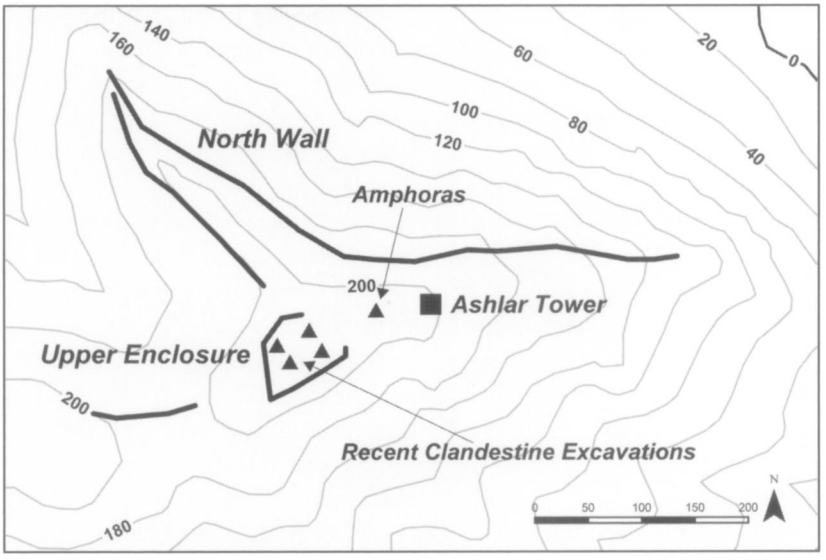

Figure 5. Classical–Hellenistic fortifications at Stanotopi. Contour interval 20 m. W. R. Caraher

CLASSICAL–HELLENISTIC FORTIFICATIONS AT STANOTOPI

The Classical–Hellenistic fortifications at Stanotopi have been clearly and accurately described by Stroud, who dated the architecture to the 4th–3rd centuries B.C., with a latest date of 224 B.C., based on the pottery found in the vicinity, as well as historical probability.[24] The most impressive element of the fortifications is the freestanding, nearly square tower located on the summit of the relatively low easternmost spur of Mt. Oneion, overlooking Loutro Elenis (ancient Chersonesos). Made of rectangular ashlar blocks laid in rough courses, it measures 8.80 × 9.10 m and is preserved to a maximum height of 1.20 m (Fig. 5). To the west of the tower is the so-called upper enclosure, covering an area of about 75 × 125 m and seemingly surrounded by walls made of cut rectangular blocks whose precise extent cannot be determined.[25] Stroud inferred from the thick scatter of pottery and the presence of a cistern that intensive activity had taken place within the enclosure during antiquity.[26] The cistern and the ashlar tower may have supported a garrison in the upper enclosure and demonstrate a significant interest and investment in the fortification of this strategic height.

Below and to the north of the tower and the upper enclosure, a wall ran approximately east–west along the top of a steep slope for ca. 600 m.[27] In

24. Stroud 1971a; see pp. 139–145 for discussion of the date.

25. Stroud 1971a, pp. 129–135, figs. 2, 3.

26. Stroud 1971a, p. 133. Recent clandestine excavations have revealed another possible cistern cut into the conglomerate near the northeast corner of the tower. Unfortunately, the mouth and shape of this cistern were destroyed by the looters, making it impossible to determine the dimensions with any precision. The looting also revealed what may be tentatively interpreted as three graves in the upper enclosure; each appears to have been ca. 1.80 m in length and ca. 0.70 m in width. Around one possible grave was a large scatter of Classical–Hellenistic coarse- and fine-ware pottery that included two substantial amphora fragments (**11**, **12**; Fig. 13) apparently disturbed in the course of the digging.

27. Stroud 1971a, pp. 135–137, fig. 3.

contrast to the other structures mentioned above, this wall was built with two faces of unworked stones filled with rubble and measured ca. 2.50 m in thickness. Although there were few traces of a wall along the south, Stroud reasonably proposed that this north wall continued around the whole of the summit of Stanotopi, with the tower approximately at its center and a possible gate along the wall's south side. Stroud thought it likely that this larger enclosure was an expansion of the upper enclosure, although he admitted that the chronology could have been reversed.[28]

West of this substantial complex, Stroud noted two long walls designed to guard the two lowest routes across the Oneion ridge, located west of Stanotopi and east of the hill designated 427 in his figure 1.[29] These walls lie along the crest of the ridge between the two heights and run roughly east–west. The eastern wall was preserved for ca. 245 m, the western for ca. 255 m. Built of rubble, in a style similar to that of the larger enclosure, the walls were 2.40–2.50 m thick. Although this area is overgrown with dense vegetation and has been disturbed by the bulldozing of a forest road, one can nevertheless trace short fragments of the walls (Figs. 4, 5).

CLASSICAL–HELLENISTIC FORTIFICATIONS AT MARITSA

The second fortress on Oneion, above the Maritsa pass, is also datable to the Late Classical–Early Hellenistic period. It has three parts: a fortress, or enceinte, and two independent shield walls, all apparently constructed at the same time (Fig. 6). The fortress encloses the highest point on the eastern part of the mountain and consists of a large enclosure with two major spur walls. The shield walls, one to the northeast and the other to the west, served as additional defenses for the main enclosure. The Maritsa and Stanotopi fortifications are similar in organization, suggesting comparable functions and dates of construction.

The Maritsa fortress has a commanding view of the central Isthmia corridor to the north and the ravine-dissected hill country to the south around modern Galataki and ancient Solygeia. The Gulf of Corinth and the Saronic Gulf are clearly visible to the north, although part of the ancient harbor of Kenchreai is obscured by the eastern heights of the mountain. The Saronic Gulf may be seen to the south and east, along with the coast from Loutro Elenis to the village of Almyri and the site on the suggestively named hill of Vigla (meaning lookout post or watch), which has evidence for occupation from prehistory to the Byzantine period.[30] Immediately to the east, the hill of Stanotopi with its tower is visible as well. The modern villages of Examilia and Xylokeriza, along with much of Acrocorinth, fall within the fortification's view to the west.

While it seems likely from the arrangement of shield walls that the fortress served to secure the heights of Oneion against an enemy from the north, it also would have controlled the southern approach to the pass. In fact, anyone beginning an ascent of Mt. Oneion from the south in the general vicinity of the Maritsa pass would quickly fall out of the view from Stanotopi, but never from the view of the fortified heights of

28. Stroud 1971a, p. 137.
29. Stroud 1971a, p. 128.
30. Wiseman 1978, p. 58.

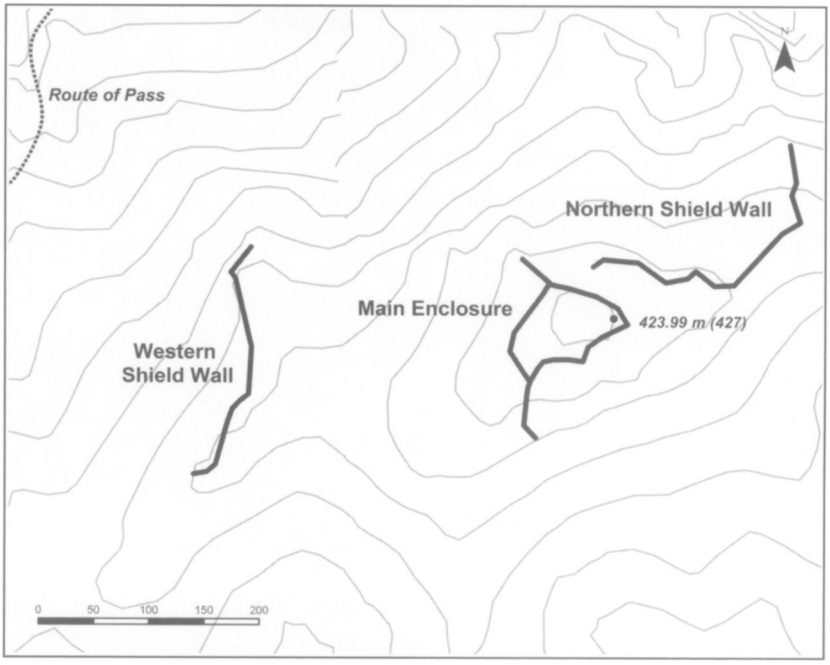

Figure 6. Classical–Hellenistic fortifications above the Maritsa pass. Contour interval 20 m. W. R. Caraher

Maritsa. It is possible that Maritsa's favorable position obviated the need for a watchtower such as the one found on Stanotopi and elsewhere in the Corinthia.[31]

The Oneion ridge dominates the Isthmia/Examilia basin, and if the fortification walls stood higher in antiquity, which they almost assuredly did, they would have been visible from the Isthmus. From the south the fortress also would have been visually impressive.

Main Enclosure

The walls of the main enclosure are largely preserved. They surround a rocky, mostly treeless peak covering an area of over 5,000 m^2. The peak rises gently to the east toward Stroud's hill 427; today a Hellenic Army Geographical Service geodetic marker with an elevation of 423.99 m stands just inside the enclosure wall at its easternmost point (Fig. 6). The enclosure has a maximum length east–west of 110 m and a maximum width, roughly north–south, of 72 m.

The course of the enclosure wall is visible for almost the entire circuit. The walls are constructed of roughly cut stones laid in two faces with a rubble fill (Fig. 7), the same construction that Stroud noted at Stanotopi. There is no evidence for the use of mortar or rectangular blocks. In a number of places both faces of the wall are visible; it measures 1.80–2.00 m in thickness. At its greatest height the wall is preserved to just over 1 m, and it is possible that the stone walls did not stand much higher. Along the course of the wall are numerous large fragments of Lakonian and Corinthian tiles (discussed below), and these may indicate that the upper part of the wall was constructed of mudbrick with a covering of tiles to protect it.[32]

The main enclosure is an irregular polygon, with its walls taking advantage of the local topography as much as possible. The north and east

31. Watchtowers are not uncommon on elevated locations in the Corinthia; there are examples at Kefalari (Wiseman 1978, pp. 118–119, figs. 166–168) and along the Epidaurian border (Dixon 2000, pp. 51–93).

32. Pritchett (1974, pp. 133–146) has proposed that some low stone walls may have served as anchors for wooden palisades. The preponderance of tiles, however, suggests that these low walls were socles for upper walls made of mudbrick.

Figure 7. Typical section of the main enclosure wall of the Maritsa fortifications. Photo T. E. Gregory

sides are the least accessible, as they lie at the top of steep cliffs. The west wall is built along a slight ridge of bedrock. The easiest way to travel from the pass to the main enclosure is to ascend the gradual western slope, but no evidence for a gate exists along the west wall. The only other approach would be from the south, albeit over much steeper terrain. In the middle of its course, the south wall protrudes slightly to the south to take advantage of a local increase in slope.[33] In general, however, the gentler slope of the south face of the mountain suggests that access to the main enclosure was gained from that direction, which agrees with our understanding that defensive forces would have sought primarily to hold the Isthmus against invaders from the north. It seems reasonable to imagine that the fortifications at both Maritsa and Stanotopi, standing guard over the northern approach to the Peloponnese and the southern reaches of Corinthian territory, were designed to be resupplied from the south.

Western Shield Wall

The western shield wall runs north–south along a ridge ca. 200 m west of the main enclosure. It extends 220 m from a bedrock outcropping at its northern terminus to an abrupt drop at the south. It is similar in construction to the walls of the main enclosure, with a rubble fill and a rough facing without mortar. The western shield wall was thicker, however, reaching nearly 3 m in some places. As with the walls of the main enclosure and those at Stanotopi, Lakonian and Corinthian tiles were occasionally

33. Just to the east of this southward diversion is the only, very meager, evidence for a gate. At this point the wall seems to stop abruptly, and several uncut stones possibly laid in courses may represent the eastern side of a gate. There is no evidence for a western side of a gate, however, and the route to this part of the southern wall would be quite steep. The presence of a major spur wall projecting from the southwest corner of the enclosure's circuit suggests that the protection of this southern flank was a priority, and this might also imply the presence of a gate in the south wall. Stroud (1971a, pp. 134, 137) noted that the fortifications at Stanotopi are most easily approached from the south side as well, and the only evidence for a possible gate was on the southern flank of the north wall.

found along its course. In places the western shield wall stands to a height of 1.20 m.

To the west of the wall, the ground falls away steeply toward the north–south ravine that forms the Maritsa pass through the mountain. The area immediately to the east of the wall is more or less level, and scattered concentrations of broken pottery are visible there. Farther to the east, the rocky ground, now heavily wooded, rises to the west wall of the main enclosure. The western shield wall does not connect directly with the main enclosure. The steep northern and southern faces of the mountain would have made it difficult, if not impossible, for an army to ascend to the area between the western shield wall and the main enclosure.

It is important to note that this shield wall does not block the pass itself. It is situated to overlook the Maritsa pass, and can be seen today from the southern end of the pass below. Moreover, it stands at a place that is already difficult to access from the pass; although the 1:5,000 maps indicate a modern path running from the pass to the wall, this would be useful only for shepherds or resin collectors. The western shield wall was therefore probably intended to discourage a direct assault on the main enclosure from the pass and to protect a stretch of level high ground from which the pass itself could be controlled. It would have provided a barrier behind which guards could hide. Depending on the precise course of the ancient route through the pass, the wall was between 200 and 300 m distant, placing it at the margin of the effective range of ancient projectiles.[34] The pottery on the level ground immediately to the east of the wall may reflect the use of this level area for troop quarters.

Northern Shield Wall

The northern shield wall runs for a distance of 300 m along the top of the northern slope of the mountain. It is of the same construction as the western shield wall, but it is on average only 2.50 m thick. The eastern part of the wall runs for 80 m almost north–south along a rocky spur projecting from the face of Mt. Oneion. It then turns sharply to the southwest for 80 m before turning west, following the contours, for nearly 130 m. Its western end seems to be in the rocky and wooded northern face of Oneion, 40 m to the north of the northeastern wall of the main enclosure.

The most distinctive feature of this wall is an abrupt, right-angle turn some 100 m from its eastern end. To the south of this sharp turn, there is a natural depression in the exposed bedrock that may have provided a level place for a tower. There are, however, no exceptional concentrations of pottery or additional tumble that might indicate more intensive activity here than elsewhere along the wall. Nevertheless, there is no topographical reason for the well-defined right-angle turn in the wall, and it is possible that the natural depression in the bedrock was used as a foundation for a tower of some sort, perhaps constructed of mudbrick or even wood.

Pottery was visible on the surface between the northern shield wall and the east wall of the main enclosure. Although tiles of various kinds were

34. Mcleod (1965) notes that the range of archers rarely exceeded 200 m, and Echols (1949–1950) suggests a similar range for the ancient sling; see also Baitinger 2001, pp. 31–32.

predominant, there were also pithos and amphora fragments, suggesting that the defenders used this area for storage or habitation.

As in the case of the western shield wall, the exact tactical purpose of this wall is difficult to discern. Less than 200 m to the north of the wall are steep cliffs, making a direct ascent from the plain below perilous. Perhaps the wall served to guard the main enclosure from an army ascending the north face of Mt. Oneion from the east—a difficult, if not impossible, route. It may also have protected the relatively flat area on top of the Oneion ridge where troops presumably camped.

FORTIFICATIONS BETWEEN STANOTOPI AND MARITSA

East of the Maritsa peak and the main enclosure, the ground drops down to a high, relatively flat saddle and then rises to another very small peak at an elevation of 393.80 m, according to the topographic maps of the Hellenic Army Geographical Service. A series of walls guard the ascent to this peak. These are not well preserved; many of their stones have been incorporated into a large *mandra* (goat fold) immediately southeast of the highest point (Fig. 8). In their current condition they appear primarily to have blocked ascent from the east and south. It is difficult to evaluate the possibility of an eastern ascent, since a large modern quarry has destroyed much of the topography of this part of the mountain. To judge from the 1:5,000 maps, produced almost 40 years ago when the quarry was much smaller, however, it seems probable that the easiest route of ascent to this part of the mountain was from the south; the eastern slopes of the mountain are quite steep and interrupted by sheer cliffs.

The highest peak between Stanotopi and Maritsa may have received more substantial fortifications. A short course of roughly trimmed stones is arranged in an east–west line along the steep northern slope immedi-

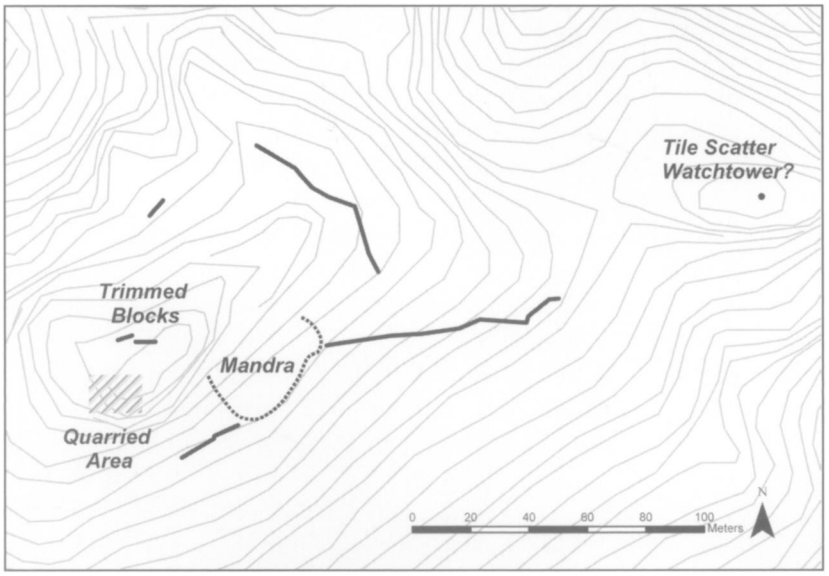

Figure 8. Walls on the eastern face of Mt. Oneion. Contour interval 4 m. W. R. Caraher

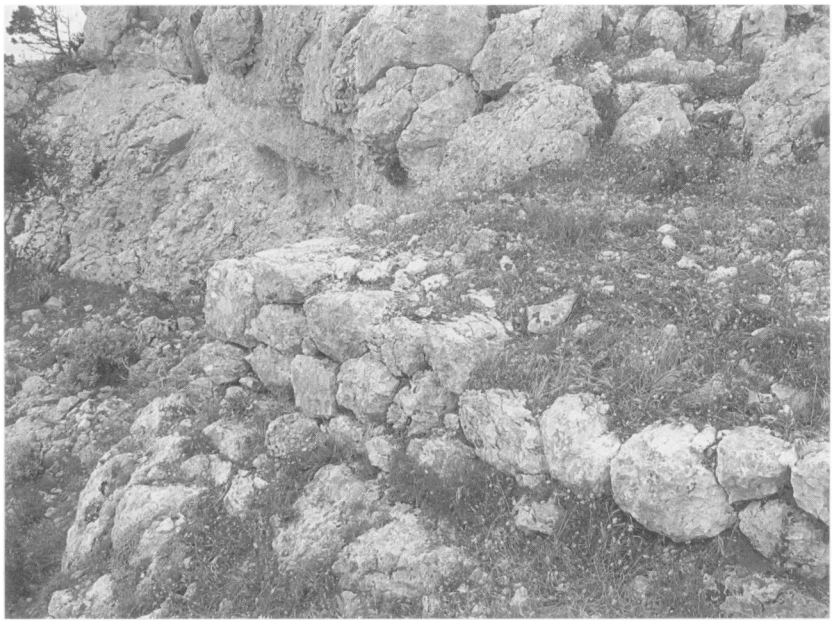

Figure 9. Trimmed stones on the northern face of Mt. Oneion. Photo T. E. Gregory

Figure 10. Niches cut in the southern face of the mountain east of the Maritsa pass. Photo T. E. Gregory

ately below the high point of the ridge (Fig. 9). This wall is flanked to the north by another east–west line of stone, producing what could well be an entrance to an upper enclosure similar to what Stroud argued for the Stanotopi fortifications. The stones in these walls were quarried from the mountain itself, and several quarry cuts are evident in the exposed bedrock of the ridge.

Although these two short, isolated walls do not provide evidence for a full-fledged ashlar fortification on the Oneion ridge, they might suggest an attempt to fortify the mountain in a more permanent way. On the southern side of this peak (see the "Quarried Area" in Fig. 8), several niches have been cut in the rock (Fig. 10). These are semicircular in shape

and are raised above the modern ground level. They may have been cut for the placement of votives in a fashion not uncommon in antiquity (see, e.g., the Sanctuary of Aphrodite on the Ἱερὰ Ὁδός at Daphni). The area has been extensively used by shepherds over the centuries, and no other traces of antiquity survive, but it is not impossible that a small sanctuary existed at this spot.

Just to the east of this peak is another, somewhat lower, outcropping (shown as 355.00 m on the Greek army map) just above the western edge of the modern quarry. No fortification walls were discovered on this peak, but there is a thick scatter of tile and pithos fragments. There are no other remains of architecture in this area nor any evidence for foundation cuttings. Nevertheless, there may have been a structure here roughly contemporary with the fortifications at Stanotopi and Maritsa, although it is now impossible to be certain.

FINDS FROM THE ANCIENT FORTIFICATIONS AT MARITSA

In 2001 EKAS carried out an intensive investigation of the area around the Maritsa Classical–Hellenistic fortifications. This involved the detailed description of the architectural remains and artifacts (mostly pottery) on the surface of the ground. There were two impediments to our task. First, the very irregular visibility of artifacts due to the dense vegetation on the Oneion ridge limited our ability to sample the surface systematically. Second, the relatively remote and rugged location of the fortifications imposed limitations on the size of our survey team and the time that we could spend there. These difficulties, combined with our commitment to low-impact archaeology and the decision to remove only a few artifacts from the area, affected the nature of our investigation. Description, photography, and illustration of artifacts were carried out in the field, and the vast majority of the objects were left where they were found. Only small representative samples were brought back to our study area for further analysis. This approach was deemed appropriate from both ethical and scientific perspectives, as the finds were generally similar throughout the area.[35]

Our survey technique was similar to that used in the course of the EKAS high-intensity, gridded collections of Localized Cultural Anomalies (LOCAs).[36] We established a flexible grid over the entire site and sampled sections of the grid where visibility permitted. The goal of this method was to determine whether there was substantial functional or chronological variation present on the top of the hill. The poor surface visibility made traditional density calculations essentially irrelevant.

Overall, 757 artifacts were recorded using the chronotype system.[37] The artifacts were chronologically homogeneous. All datable premodern material could be assigned to the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. Table 1 provides a summary of the most common finds in order of frequency. These finds are now stored at the facilities of the Ohio State University Excavations at Isthmia in Kyras Vrysi.

35. For this approach, which is consistent with the methods adopted by EKAS throughout the survey area, see Tartaron et al., forthcoming; Gregory 2004.

36. Tartaron et al., forthcoming.

37. For the chronotype system, see Given and Knapp 2003, pp. 14–16; Gregory 2004.

TABLE 1. FINDS FROM THE MARITSA FORTIFICATIONS

Chronotype	*Quantity*	*Percent*
Tile, Lakonian, Classical–Hellenistic	207	27.3
Tile, painted, Classical–Hellenistic	163	21.5
Amphora, Corinthian B	124	16.4
Tile, Greek Corinthian pan tile, yellow slip	82	10.8
Pithos, orange and blue core	63	8.3
Medium coarse ware, Classical–Hellenistic	31	4.1
Tile, Lakonian, painted, Classical–Hellenistic	30	4.0
Kitchen ware, Classical–Hellenistic	17	2.3
Amphora, Corinthian A	13	1.7
Undiagnostic	27	3.6

The overwhelming majority of artifacts found (482, or ca. 64% of the total sample) were Lakonian and Corinthian tiles, many of them slipped. Also common were storage and transport vessels, especially Corinthian B amphoras, and fragments of pithoi. Classical–Hellenistic cooking pots were frequent finds on the surface of the site. Few examples were collected of fine ware or the semifine (plain ware) pottery commonly associated with domestic assemblages in the Corinthia.

The following catalogue provides examples of common finds from the Maritsa main enclosure. All measurements are given in meters.

Catalogue

1 Stamped Attic black-glazed bowl Fig. 11

9008-146-1.

P.L. 0.025; p.W. 0.017; Th. 0.003.

Fine red clay (2.5YR 5/8) with few voids. Fragment preserves small part of the base and the attachment for the missing ring foot. Shiny black glaze interior and exterior, stamped (rouletted) marks on the bottom interior.

2 Semiglazed bowl Fig. 11

9008-157-101.

P.H. 0.030; est. Diam. (foot) 0.05.

Fine pink clay (7.5 YR 7/4) with some small voids. Bowl with low ring foot.

Cf. *Corinth* VII.3, pp. 28–29; probably 4th century as the ring foot is higher in the 3rd century.

3 Blister ware jug Fig. 11

9008-157-102.

P.H. 0.034; Diam. (neck) 0.029.

Relatively fine pink clay (5YR 7/4) with a few small brown inclusions and small voids, fired gray on the surfaces. Small jug with vertical neck and flaring rim.

4 Medium coarse jug or pitcher Fig. 11

9008-130-101.

P.H. 0.064; est. Diam. (rim) 0.10.

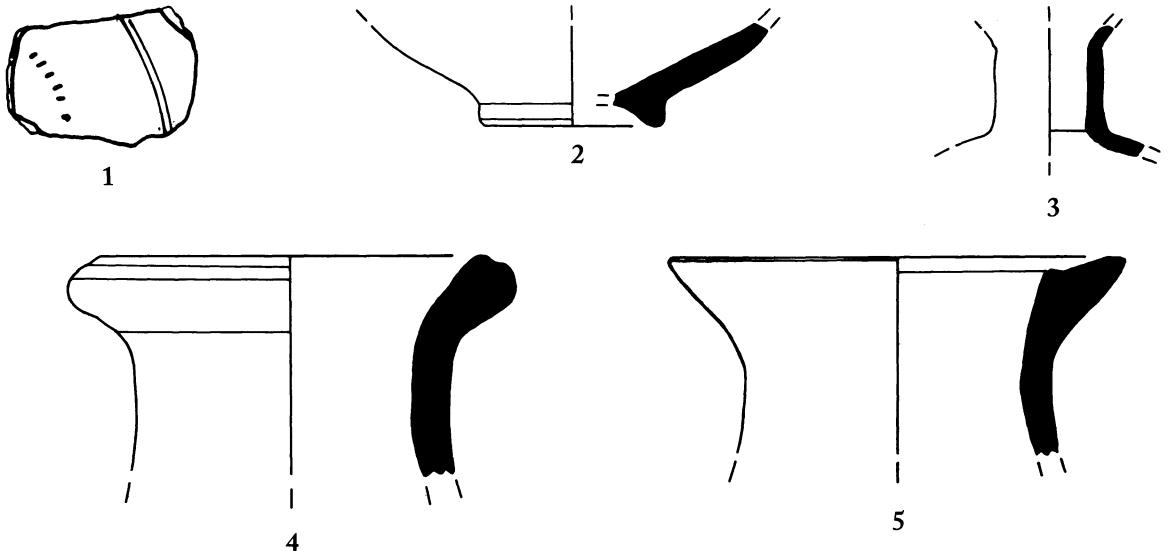

Figure 11. Typical ceramic finds from the Maritsa main enclosure. Scales 1:1 (1) and 1:2 (2–5). H. Cook

Reddish yellow clay (5YR 7/6) with small–medium brown and black and some sparkling inclusions. Large jug or pitcher with tapering neck and flaring, thickened rim; lip with a broad groove on the upper surface.

5 Medium coarse jug or pitcher Fig. 11

9008-166-101.

P.H. 0.060; est. Diam. (rim) 0.12.

Description identical to **4**, except that rim is pointed, with a shallow groove on the exterior.

6 Coarse mortarium Fig. 12

9008-183-101.

P.H. 0.061; est. Diam. (rim) 0.29.

Coarse reddish yellow clay (5YR 7/6) with many large white, black, and brown inclusions and small voids. Mortarium with plain vertical rim; a broad horizontal ridge, tapering toward the exterior and sharply cut back, probably served as a handle.

7 Corinthian B amphora toe Fig. 12

9008-145-105.

P.H. 0.058; max. Diam. (toe) 0.051.

Relatively fine reddish yellow clay (5YR 6/6) with small black and red inclusions and voids. Bulbous amphora toe with distinct round impression on bottom.

8 Pithos with molded decoration Fig. 12

9008-162-5.

P.W. 0.112; p.H. 0.096; max. Th. 0.022.

Coarse red clay (10R 5/8) with many medium–large angular blue-gray stone inclusions and voids, fired gray at core. Body sherd is broken all around; two raised horizontal bands, one rectangular, the other rounded in section; thin black slip on exterior.

9 Slipped Lakonian tile Fig. 12

9008-153-1.

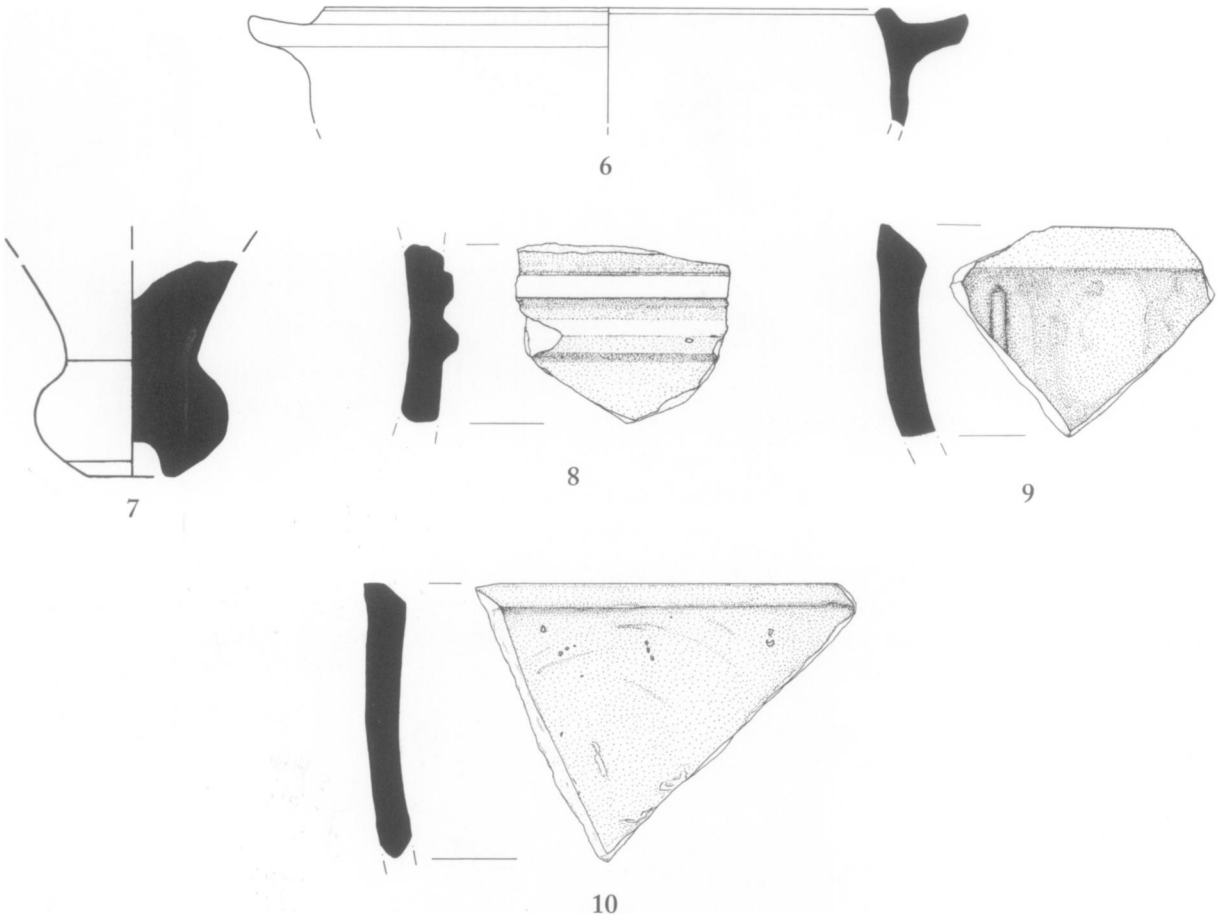

Figure 12. Typical ceramic finds from the Maritsa main enclosure.
Scales 1:2 (7) and 1:4 (**6**, **8–10**). H. Cook

P. dims. 0.140 × 0.112; Th. 0.026.

Medium coarse reddish yellow clay (5YR 6/6) with many medium–large brown inclusions, small gold sparkling inclusions, and many small–large voids. Lakonian tile with chamfered edge and deep groove on concave side; orange slip also on concave side.

10 Slipped Lakonian tile Fig. 12

9008-150-1.

P. dims. 0.198 × 0.148; Th. 0.021.

Medium coarse light red clay (2.5YR 6/8) with few medium white, red, and gold sparking inclusions and few medium voids. Tile with slightly chamfered edge; rather thin; dark red slip on concave side.

The assemblage is consistent with what one would expect from a fortified area occupied for short periods of time. It is understandable that the inhabitants made extensive use of storage vessels, as there is no evidence for a local water supply. Cooking vessels also would have been required by soldiers encamped on the mountain for any length of time. The assemblage lacks any artifacts recognizable as potentially religious in nature, such as miniatures, figurines, or lamps. Chronologically, the finds generally fit best in the second half of the 4th century B.C., but it is possible that many of them would still have circulated in the 3rd century.

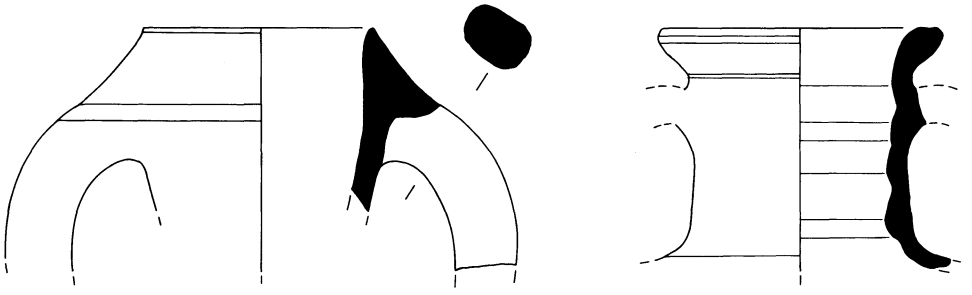

Figure 13. Two amphora rims from the Oneion ridge. Scale 1:4. H. Cook

OTHER FINDS FROM THE ONEION RIDGE

In addition to the intensive collection conducted during the 2001 field season, we also collected nonsystematic, judgmental samples of highly diagnostic sherds from other areas of the Oneion ridgeline. Two well-preserved amphora rims, one Corinthian A and one Corinthian B, were recovered from a hole that probably had been dug by looters on Stanotopi hill.

Catalogue

11 Corinthian A amphora Fig. 13

ST 1.

P.H. 0.128; Diam. (rim) 0.122; Diam. (handle) 0.036.

Coarse red clay (2.5YR 5/8) with many small–large red, brown, and black inclusions and voids. Typical Corinthian A amphora with heavy pointed folded rim and oval handles.

12 Corinthian B amphora Fig. 13

ST 2.

P.H. 0.128; est. Diam. (rim) 0.15.

Hard light red clay (2.5YR 6/8), fairly fine with few small voids. Small part of the shoulder, half of the neck, and about a quarter of the rim. Vertical neck with broad wheel ridges on the interior; flaring, pointed rim, horizontal on the top. Attachment for a vertical oval handle just below the rim.

On the outcrop immediately to the west of the modern quarry, we observed several well-preserved examples of painted Lakonian tiles identical to those found in the vicinity of the Maritsa fortress. At the same spot, a large fragment of a particularly elaborate Classical–Hellenistic pithos body sherd was also found. At no place along the entire length of the Oneion ridge was there any concentration of pottery from a period other than the Classical–Hellenistic era. In an area such as the Corinthia, which is generally characterized by a carpet of chronologically variable artifacts, the uniformity of these finds is truly remarkable and most likely testifies to the exceptional circumstances under which this nearly inaccessible mountaintop was fortified and used.

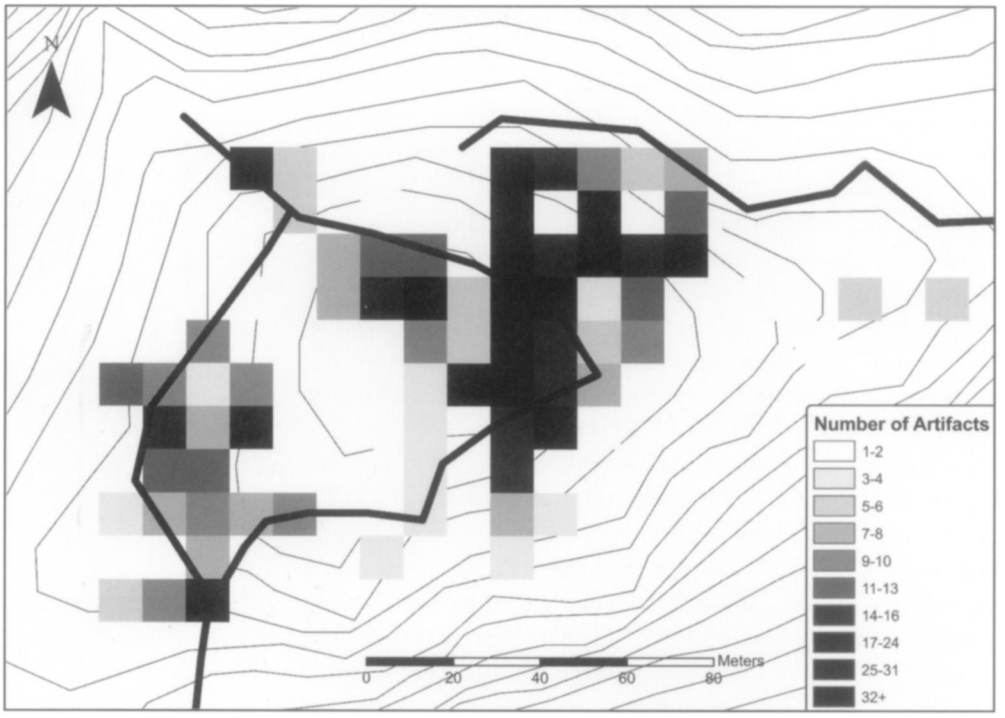

Figure 14. Density of finds in the vicinity of the Maritsa fortifications. Contour interval 4 m. W. R. Caraher

Figure 14 shows the findspots and the gridded density of artifacts from the Maritsa fortifications. Although the dense ground cover around many parts of the fortifications certainly affected our ability to recognize artifacts, it seems that the archaeological material was concentrated primarily in two areas: one along the western wall of the main enclosure, the other at its eastern edge and down the slope, especially to the north and northeast. Counts were certainly far lower in the central area of the enclosure. This disparity may be the result of the use of tiles to cap a possible mudbrick superstructure on the stone foundations of the fortification walls. In addition, it is possible that the inhabitants of the fortifications spent more of their time along the walls than they did in the central part of the defensive area.

HISTORY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND FUNCTION OF THE ANCIENT FORTIFICATIONS

Wiseman and Stroud have ably discussed the literary evidence for the fortification of the Isthmus during antiquity. They focus primarily on the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods, when the Isthmus became a highway for the forces of outside powers such as Attica, Thebes, and Macedon seeking to intervene among the rival and recalcitrant cities of the Peloponnese.[38] Political conditions dictated that almost every occasion for the defense of Mt. Oneion was connected with the movement of a northern army south into the Peloponnese. The strategy of fortifying the mountain and allowing a large stretch of fertile Corinthian land to remain

38. Wiseman 1963; Stroud 1971a, pp. 139–145.

undefended reflects the interests of foreign (non-Corinthian) powers in defending the Isthmus.[39]

The function of the fortifications documented in this article is highly relevant to debates on whether we should understand Greek fortifications as a local, in this case Corinthian, defensive response or as the work of non-local powers such as Athens, Thebes, Sparta, or Macedon.[40] As Wiseman and Stroud have argued, it is not necessary to assume that the mountain was fortified by the Corinthians simply because it is located in Corinthian territory. The presence of a second rough fortification above the Maritsa pass does not substantially challenge Stroud's conclusions regarding the defense of the Isthmus along the Oneion line. It does, however, allow us to offer several modest contributions to previous discussions of the history and topography of this region.

To understand the fortifications on Mt. Oneion, it is necessary to review briefly the ancient understanding of the topography and communication network in the area. While numerous scholars have studied the roads in the southwestern Corinthia and the passes to the Argolid, the eastern Corinthia, particularly the area immediately south of the Isthmus, has not received as much systematic attention.[41] Nevertheless, Stroud, Wiseman, and Dixon provide general treatments of the historical topography of the larger region, establishing the importance of Mt. Oneion within this context.

There are no explicit references to military activity on Mt. Oneion in the century before 366 B.C. The unsettled conditions of the second half of the 4th century, coinciding with the establishment of Macedonian power, along with the evidence from the finds associated with the walls, make it certain that these passes were used and defended during this time. Stroud thus established a sound historical terminus post quem of ca. 350 B.C. for the fortification based on archaeological and historical data. The best insights into the intended function of the fortifications and their respective passes, however, derive from an earlier period, 370–366 B.C., when Theban armies under Epaminondas moved north and south through the Isthmus.[42] The accounts of the Theban wars in Xenophon describe the efforts of various forces to block the eastern routes over Mt. Oneion without permanent fortifications. These efforts and the regularity with which Epaminondas breached the Isthmus at this point might have led to the fortification of the mountain sometime after 350 B.C.

The humble walls at Stanotopi and Maritsa do not feature prominently in the literary sources from later periods. One passage, already noted by Stroud and others, may make an oblique reference to the presence of fortifications in the proximity of Kenchreai and the Oneion ridge. In 315 B.C., during the Wars of the Successors, Alexander, the son of Polyperchon, sought to hold the Corinthia against Kassander. Diodoros (19.63.4) tells us that Kassander

> καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον Κεγχρεὰς ἐπολιορκήσας ἐδῄωσε τὴν χώραν τῶν Κορινθίων, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δύο φρούρια κατὰ κράτος ἑλὼν τοὺς ὑπ' Ἀλεξάνδρου καθεσταμένους φρουροὺς ὑποσπόνδους ἀφῆκεν.

39. Stroud (1971a, pp. 139–145) provides a careful summary of the various parties who garrisoned the Isthmus, and the Oneion line in particular.

40. E.g., Lauter-Bufe 1988; McCredie 1966.

41. An exception is Dixon 2000.

42. Stroud 1971a, pp. 139–142, with sources.

> first took Kenchreai and plundered the fields of the Corinthians. Then, after taking two fortresses by storm, he dismissed under truce the garrisons that had been placed in them by Alexander.[43]

Just one year earlier, these troops had forced Kassander to take his troops from Megara to Epidauros by sea (Diod. Sic. 19.54.3). Although the passage lacks any detail concerning the two fortifications, Stroud thought that the fortifications on Stanotopi, near Kenchreai, were reasonable candidates as they were "in the vicinity of the heaviest fighting."[44] Following this logic, and considering that Diodoros puts the conquest of the two fortifications directly after the siege of Kenchreai, we believe it is plausible to suggest that the two fortresses are those of Stanotopi and Maritsa.

While the exact date and specific function of these defenses remain unclear, it seems most likely that the enclosures on Stanotopi and Maritsa were fortified camps designed to provide protection and a base of operations for forces assigned to hold these important passes.[45] Their simple architectural style, limited evidence for long-term occupation, and strategic placement find parallels in other strategic settings, such as the fortifications at the Dema Gap near Thermopylai and the better-built, more substantial Dema Wall between Mt. Aigaleos and Mt. Parnes.[46] Moreover, the recurrent instances of foreign detachments being stationed in the Corinthia during the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods help to explain the presence of modest fortifications suitable for short-term defensive deployments. It is worth noting that, in contrast to the Dema Wall in Attica, these fortifications did not serve to block the pass itself. It seems likely that they were designed to allow a force responsible for blocking the pass to occupy a fortified position on high ground in the immediate vicinity. Following Stroud's interpretation of the walls on Stanotopi, we conclude that the fortifications on Mt. Oneion at the Maritsa pass belong to a growing corpus of humble fortifications that served to complement and reinforce the more sophisticated and substantial examples of military architecture found throughout the Greek world.

VENETIAN DEFENSES ON MOUNT ONEION

The Stanotopi and Maritsa passes were also fortified during the Second Venetian period. Both sets of fortifications were designed to cut the north–south routes between the Isthmus and the area south of Mt. Oneion. They were constructed of identical masonry, with exterior walls of irregular blocks filled with rubble and mortar. The exterior blocks were roughly hewn on their outer surface to make a relatively smooth face. The outer

43. Trans. R. M. Geer, Cambridge, Mass., 1947.

44. Stroud 1971a, p. 143; see n. 7, above. Cf. Perlman 2000, pp. 148–149.

45. For numerous examples from throughout the Greek world, see McCredie 1966; Pritchett 1974, pp. 133–146; Lawrence 1979, pp. 160–167. For some recent dissenting opinions, particularly regarding the fortifications at Korone, see Lauter-Bufe 1988. For the Dema Wall, see Munn 1993.

46. For the sometimes acrimonious discussion of the complex fortifications around Thermopylai, many of which are very similar in construction to the walls on Mt. Oneion, see Pritchett 1958, 1994; MacKay 1963; Cherf 1996, pp. 56–59.

surfaces were covered by a coat of mortar that has mostly disappeared but was presumably applied over the entire face. The exterior faces of the walls have a significant upward taper or battering, a characteristic of military construction in this period. In the first quarter of the 20th century, Fowler observed a finished top made of triangular-shaped blocks at several points along the Stanotopi wall. The wall tops are no longer preserved at either location today.[47]

Each fortification complex is a barrier wall with a fighting platform along the interior, terminating in a rectangular tower (hypothesized for Stanotopi, as the western end was destroyed by quarrying during the past 30 years). In each case, the wall crosses the road through the pass relatively low on the mountain, about a third of the way to the top, at a point where the road itself changed course and the natural lay of the land made evasion difficult (see above, Fig. 4). The purpose of the tower was to block an evasion downhill, while permitting enfilading fire back up across the road. The fortifications at the Maritsa pass continued up the mountain above the tower, to further prevent an army from ascending the pass or from positioning itself behind the fortifications, where the defenders would have been unprotected. The design of the Stanotopi fortifications was more complex (Fig. 15). The wall ran between a series of natural heights, each of which was defended by a bastion. The eastern and western bastions were open in the rear, while the central bastion was pentagonal, evidently designed to cover the stretch of wall both east and west.

We have no idea whether these two fortifications were actually used to defend the Peloponnese at the time of the final Ottoman attack. Probably they were not, because their usefulness depended on the Venetians being able to hold the main lines of attack at the Hexamilion, the coastline near Kenchreai, and the Xeropotamos Valley. Finlay reports that in late July of 1715, the Ottomans, under the command of Ali Kumurgi, descended into the Corinthia with a force of 70,000 men, while the Venetians had only 8,000 soldiers.[48] The Venetians placed their hopes in the local Greek population and elected to defend only five of the fortresses in the Peloponnese; the Venetian Senate ordered the dismantlement of the rest. Accordingly, the Venetians offered no resistance at the Hexamilion and, after a short siege, Acrocorinth surrendered on August 3.[49] By August 11, the Ottomans were in the Argolid and the defense of Oneion was moot.

As is common at Venetian fortifications elsewhere in Greece, virtually no pottery or other finds associated with the period of use were found in or around the Venetian defenses. Only two pieces of undiagnostic medium coarse pottery were found just outside the tower at Maritsa, while no pottery at all was seen within the fortifications at Stanotopi. In part this may be attributable to the dense ground cover at both locations, but it may also indicate that the defenses were never used or inhabited.[50]

47. *Corinth* I.1, p. 104.

48. Finlay 1877, pp. 217–222.

49. The aftermath was the famous slaughter of many Venetians and Greeks, portrayed vividly by Byron in his epic poem "The Siege of Corinth."

50. Alternatively, certain groups of people in the Venetian period may not have made great use of ceramic vessels; see Vroom 1998; 2003, pp. 85–86.

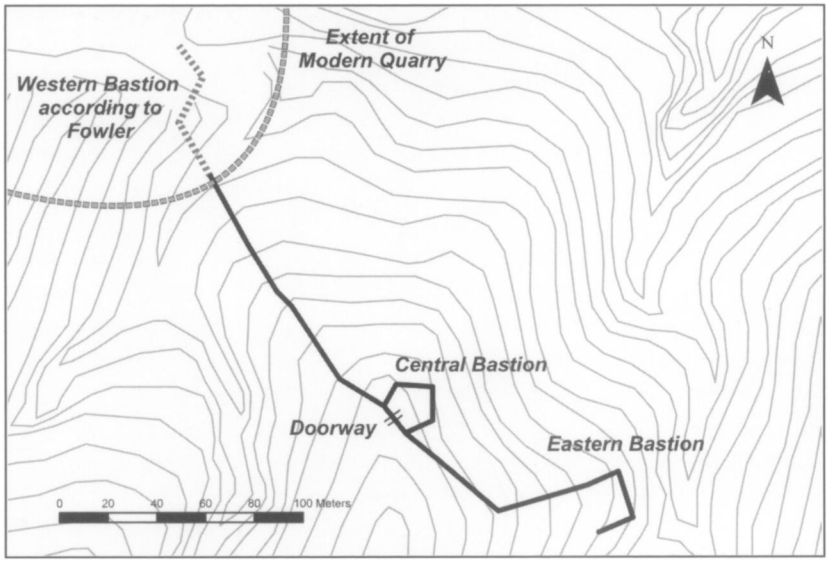

Figure 15. Venetian fortifications at Stanotopi. Contour interval 4 m. W. R. Caraher

The Fortifications at Stanotopi

Fowler was the first to mention the Stanotopi fortifications, and his description, even without a plan, has long been considered sufficient and accurate.[51] His interpretation remains fundamentally correct, and so we proceed from his observations. The fortifications were designed to block two routes through Mt. Oneion in the Stanotopi area, representing the westernmost of the passages also guarded by the Classical–Hellenistic fortifications (Fig. 15). These passes followed the course of two ravines that descend to the plain in the vicinity of the modern army camp. The Venetian fortifications were originally made up of three bastions. The bastions at the ends were designed to block the roads. The bastion approximately in the center sits at a height above the other two. It is noteworthy that this fortification complex was built in the age of gunpowder, when an enemy could overcome any defense simply by placing artillery at a nearby higher elevation. The fortifications today are in relatively good condition, although a section of the wall above the eastern bastion has recently been bulldozed for construction of a forest road, while the western bastion has been completely destroyed by the modern quarry.

Eastern Bastion

The eastern bastion is a three-sided fortification without a wall protecting its southwestern, upslope exposure. Its eastern wall runs for some 20 m parallel to the course of the ravine. This wall is pierced by three drains, which allow water accumulating inside the bastion to run out toward the ravine (Fig. 16). At its southern end, it turns almost 90 degrees and runs some 15 m to the southwest. At its northern end, this wall also turns at 90 degrees and extends nearly 50 m uphill, also in a west/southwest direction. The wall of the bastion is preserved today to a maximum height of 2.62 m above the ground on the exterior (at the southeast corner). On the interior, there is a fighting platform ca. 1.45 m wide; according to Fowler, this was once 1.25 m below the top of the wall.[52] The northeast and

51. *Corinth* I.1, pp. 104–105. Cf. Stroud 1971a, pp. 137–138, n. 9; Peppas 1990, pp. 51–57 and plan 36; 1993, pp. 142–143.

52. *Corinth* I.1, pp. 104–105.

Figure 16. Venetian fortifications at Stanotopi: east wall of the eastern bastion, from the northeast.
Photo T. E. Gregory

southeast corners of the eastern bastion are better made than the rest of the fortifications. They were constructed of headers and stretchers laid in alternating courses, a characteristic of the masonry in some contemporary Venetian castles such as the Palamidi at Nauplion.

The eastern bastion guards a path extending along the western side of a shallow ravine. It stands above a point where the ravine splits in two directions, either of which would have provided access to the summit of Stanotopi and beyond to the land south of Mt. Oneion. Presumably, however, any traveler or attacking army intending to reach the top of the mountain would not have walked at the bottom of the ravine, as at many points the floor meets impassable, nearly vertical walls of bedrock.

Like the Maritsa fortifications, the eastern bastion at Stanotopi narrowed the route over the mountain rather than blocking it totally, leaving a small, relatively level area to the southeast of the bastion wall. It is also notable that the bastion is not closed on its southwestern side. The southern wall is not as long as the northern wall, and the bastion overall has the shape of a partially open rectangle. Like the earlier Greek fortifications, the Venetian fortifications were apparently designed to be resupplied from the rear, presumably from the main Venetian power base south of the Isthmus, at Nauplion.[53]

Central Bastion

The northern wall of the eastern bastion continues west up the hill in an approximately straight line and then turns to the northwest to the top of the ridge, where a well-built pentagonal bastion occupied the high point between the ravines. In the middle of the southwest side (the continuation of the main wall) is a doorway, ca. 1.50 m wide, leading into the bastion. The fighting platform is ca. 1.50 m wide on the northern face of the main wall, and according to Fowler, it was ca. 0.50 m below the top of the wall.

53. Andrews (1953, pp. 237–238) discusses the Venetians' concern with protecting Nauplion, attested by fortifications along the coast of the Argolid from Nauplion to Drepanon, Porto Heli, and Poros. The historically close relationship between the ports of the Saronic Gulf makes it likely that the fortifications on Mt. Oneion were part of the larger strategy to defend this stretch of coastline.

Approximately 15 m west of the central bastion is a doorway through the wall, the same width as that in the bastion. On the southeastern side of the doorway a series of steps, parallel to the wall, provided access to the fighting platform on the interior.

Western Bastion

From the central bastion, the fortification wall descends for about 100 m in a line that curves slightly to the north and reaches the point where the western ravine and a road undoubtedly once ran. Today the wall terminates abruptly here, cut by a modern road and an enormous quarry. Originally, however, and even in Fowler's time, the wall extended up the slope on the western side of the ravine for about 40 m, then turned north and again west–northwest until it reached a cliff. It is difficult to understand the course of the wall in this area, largely because the topography has been thoroughly disrupted by the quarry. It is possible that the western end of the wall, which would have turned sharply to the east before ending at a large rock, served as another bastion with an open rear exposure. Fowler describes the arrangement to allow water to pass under the wall, but these remains have since been destroyed.[54]

The Fortifications at Maritsa

The Venetian fortifications in the Maritsa pass display many of the same characteristics as those at Stanotopi. They may have been built at the same time and perhaps by the same work crews. They are located astride what must have been the main road into the pass, along the eastern side of the ravine, and they are relatively low on the side of the mountain, beginning at an elevation of ca. 236 m (Figs. 17, 18). The main defense is a rectangular tower, ca. 8.80 × 11.20 m on the exterior (Fig. 19), built on a rock outcrop that adds to the elevation of the tower at a point where the original road must have made a turn along the side of the ravine. No rectangular blocks were used in the fortification, although the stones were roughly finished to make a relatively flat surface, especially on the exterior. The stones used seem to have been ca. 0.30 m in length and 0.20 m in height, but many larger stones were also employed. Both the exterior and the interior of the walls were originally covered with stucco. The interior face of the walls is vertical, but the outer face is battered.

The walls of the tower vary between ca. 0.90 and 1.15 m thick at their preserved height, although they certainly would have been thinner higher up. They are preserved as much as 3 m above the lowest level of the bedrock inside the tower, although there are places where the bedrock is actually higher than the preserved tops of the walls. Inside the tower is a fighting platform, ca. 1.00–1.25 m wide, with its original surface preserved in several places. In keeping with the declining level of the bedrock outside the tower, the fighting platform of the north and south walls descends noticeably from east to west, creating a ramplike effect. Interestingly, there seems not to have been any doorway into the tower; instead, access must have been from the level of the fighting platform of the curtain wall behind the tower.

54. *Corinth* I.1, pp. 104–105, fig. 73.

Figure 17. Venetian fortifications at the Maritsa pass, from the south. Photo T. E. Gregory

Figure 18. Venetian fortifications at the Maritsa pass, from the southeast; the rectangular tower is visible at the center. Photo T. E. Gregory

To the southeast, the mountainous terrain directly behind the tower rises precipitously. The original roadway presumably was located just behind the tower and was blocked by the wall running uphill from the tower. This wall went first in a southeasterly direction for ca. 10.50 m, and then more directly east for about 50 m before reaching a huge outcrop of rock. This curtain wall was, like the walls of the tower, ca. 1.10 m wide; it was attached to a fighting platform ca. 1.30 m wide. The original surface of the platform is relatively well preserved at many points and is sometimes even higher than the curtain wall itself. The surface of the ground inside the fortifications is very irregular, but at one point the fighting platform is ca. 1.40 m above the surface.

Over the total length of the wall, ca. 60.50 m, the elevation rises by ca. 21 m, creating an average slope of about 35%. In order to allow the soldiers to go up and down this slope with relative ease, a series of steps

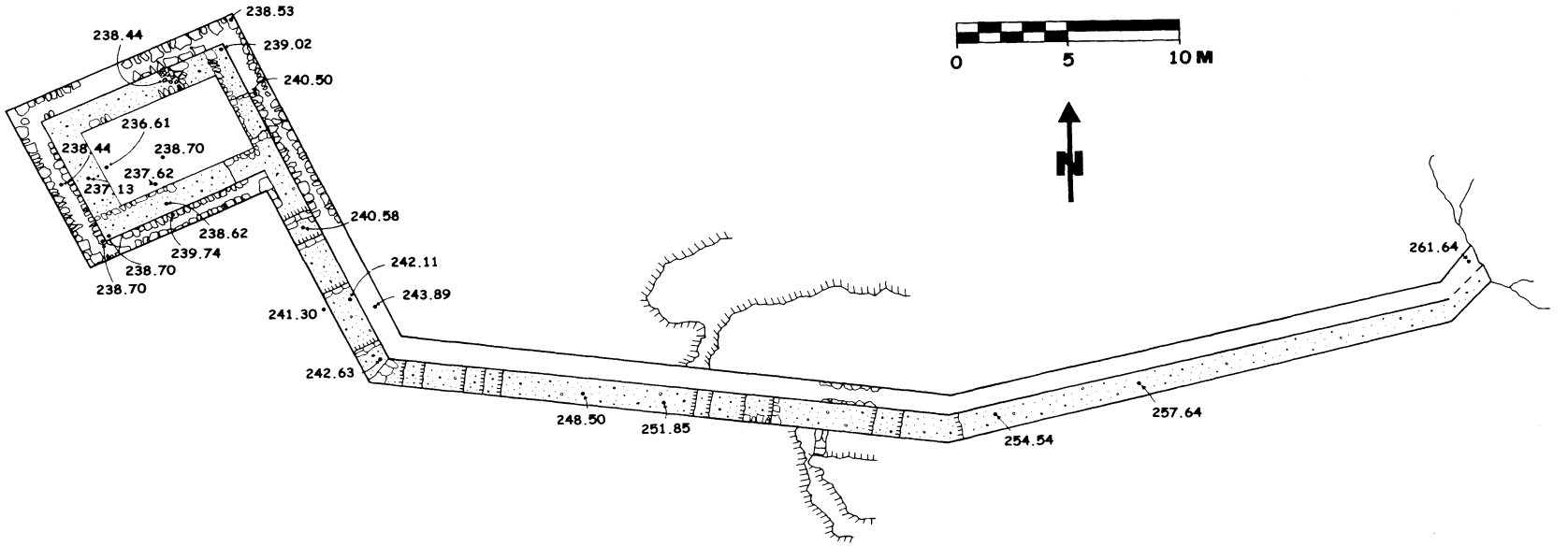

Figure 19. Plan of the Venetian fortifications at the Maritsa pass. K. D. Soteriou

were constructed at points of rapid rise, and these survive in the fighting platform today. The fortification walls are not preserved to their original height, but they stand about 2.30 m above the surface on the exterior at the highest preserved point, just beyond the jog in the wall to the east. At a point midway along the eastward stretch of wall, another structure seems to have been built flush against the fighting platform on the interior of the wall. This is not well enough preserved to allow us to be certain of its function, but it may have been a stairway up to the level of the fighting platform from the ground below.

These relatively modest fortifications are a far cry from the imposing castles built elsewhere in Greece by the Venetians at this time and known from the plans executed for Francesco Grimani, the governor.[55] Nonetheless, they must have been designed by military engineers who understood the local topography and who employed sophisticated flourishes such as arrangements for routing the flow of water through the bastion walls.

CONCLUSION

The geography of the Isthmus and the geopolitics of Greece have long demanded the fortification of this vital north–south corridor into the Peloponnese. The Hexamilion and its predecessors are well-known examples of such defenses. The presence of a complex, secondary system of fortifications, however, suggests that during some periods formidable freestanding barrier walls guarding the Corinthia and the Peloponnese did not serve the strategic or tactical purposes of those wishing to fortify the Isthmus. The Late Classical and Hellenistic periods and the Second Venetokratia were times when limited resources and the pace of events encouraged the reinforcement of existing natural defenses to prevent the movement of armies to the south. The simple fortifications of Mt. Oneion reflect a keen awareness of local topography and sound tactical reasoning. Both sets of defenses were designed to prevent the enemy from occupying local high ground, and both were positioned to take advantage of reinforcement from the south.

Although both fortifications required local knowledge for their shrewd placement and construction, they also demonstrate a genuinely regional conception of defense. The southern border of the Isthmus represented the last point at which a force could mount a concerted defense of the Peloponnese. Farther south, the numerous routes open to an invading army made the defense of any single point, even the narrow Dervenaki pass running south to the Argolid, insufficient to block the northern or southern passage of a determined foe. The various fortifications of the Isthmus, ranging from the fortress at Acrocorinth to the humble walls of the Maritsa and Stanotopi passes, endeavored to seal off the entirety of southern Greece from any northern aggressor moving overland. They would have served the needs of a regional defense far more effectively than the interests of the local Corinthians, whose territory was effectively split between the exposed area north of the Isthmus and the protected southern valleys.

55. Andrews 1953.

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