

Suggested Citation: Caraher, William R. "Extensive Team Report on Investigations of Mt. Oneion Fortifications, 2001." EKAS Field Reports. Ancient Corinth: The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey, 2001.

Extensive Team Report on Investigations of Mt. Oneion Fortifications, 2001

William R. Caraher

August 4, 2001

The Extensive Team made six trips to Mt. Oneion this season in order to complete the investigation of the large late classical/early Hellenistic fortification found there. For the purpose of this report I will observe certain conventions in naming. The pass immediately to the east of the area investigated by R. Stroud in the late 1960s and known locally as Stanotopi (the toponym Kastraki on the 1:5000 maps), I will call Pass One. The pass further west on Oneion ascends a deep saddle in the hill to the east of the village of Xylokeritza. The Extensive Team investigated this pass during the 2000/2001 field season and I will call it Pass Two.

The first trip to Mt. Oneion was in early June and involved an investigation of the Stanotopi site on the eastern most height of the mountain. This site, identified and documented by R. Stroud in the late 1960s, consists of a tower of polygonal masonry, rubble walls enclosing the top of the eastern most point of the mountain, and a series of rubble walls extending to the west. This final set of walls was apparently designed to block passage through Pass One which runs between Stanotopi and the modern quarry. We took GPS points and noted that the construction of the rubble walls was remarkably similar to the construction of the walls further west on the mountain near pass two. We also noted that while the polygonal tower likely served to monitor traffic running along the coastal road, the fortification probably performed the dual role of fortifying the position occupied by the tower and obstructing the inland pass. The role of the fortress in fortifying the inland pass has parallels with the fortress further to the west on Oneion. We collected several pieces of modern ordinance during our investigation of this area. These have been identified as 30-ought-6 shells and the lid to a watertight canister for a mortar round. It is unclear when the latter dates, but the former is likely associated with the immediate aftermath of WWII when the U.S. government sent large quantities of surplus ammunition to Greek government in support of their efforts in the civil war. While no definite military action can be associated with this ordinance, and they might have come from the Greek army training facility immediately to the north of this hill, it is possible that they reflect the continued significance of the Oneion range and its passes in the military definition of the Isthmus.

The second trip to Mt. Oneion was to document the Venetian wall and tower that sit on the northern slope of the mountain immediately to the east of Pass Two. Bon and Fowler in their discussions of the Venetian fortifications of the Isthmus seem to allude vaguely to this wall, although neither mention it specifically or describe it in any detail. T. Gregory prepared a measured drawing of wall and tower. During the documenting of this wall pink mortar was noticed for the first time. This pink concrete mortar is similar to the mortar found on Venetian and Ottoman fortifications elsewhere in the Korinthia, such as on Acrocorinth. While we recorded no diagnostic pottery, we found several pieces of heavy modern shrapnel in the immediate vicinity. We have made no effort to assign a date to the shrapnel, but it seems likely that it is associated with WWII. Like the ordinance from Stanotopi, the context for this material is unclear. There was no known battle in the pass, but local residents insist that there was fighting in that area during either WWII or the civil war. The discovery of modern ordinance does reinforce the idea, however, that the passes through Oneion seem to have been important strategic locations throughout history.

The third trip to Mt. Oneion focused again on the area around Pass One. Numerous scholars, including Wiseman, have noted the significant Venetian wall there, on the north slope of the mountain, between the modern quarry to the west and the military installation to the east (Wiseman, 54-55 fig. 53,54,55). Access to this wall is difficult and possibly dangerous as during the week there is considerable activity at both the base and the quarry. The wall itself must be accessed from a water station and abandoned quarry that sits just north of the modern road running through the military base toward the coastal road to Loutro Elenis. The water station and abandoned quarry are in a ravine. In the northern part of the ravine lies a wheat field from which a clear path leads further to the south and west. This path, which has clearly been maintained lead through the Venetian wall. The wall itself runs across a spur of land between two deep ravines, one where the modern water station and quarry sits and the other further to the south and east. The western (north-western) extent of the wall has likely been obliterated by the modern quarry, but, according to Fowler it continued across the north-western ravine. He includes in his report a picture of a drain intended to allow water as it rushed down the drainage to pass through the wall. Fowler argued that the wall served to prevent access to the ravines which south over the mountain and possible serve as pass through to Galataki. This is possible, however, it is equally likely that the spur of land between the ravines served as the pass. Its slope is reasonably gentle and regular, and would provide an easy path over eastern part of Oneion. The wall itself is massive and includes at least two enclosures, one each at its eastern and western extent. It is the same as the wall at Pass Two in basic design and construction except much larger. There are several factors that commend this wall to systematic study. While scholars have consistently noted the existence and location, it has not been carefully drawn nor have any related artefacts been documented. The wall is also under threat. A section of the eastern wall has been bulldozed to make a path. The expansion of quarry access roads threaten western end of the wall and its enclosure, and judging by the description provided by Fowler, parts of the western part of the wall have been destroyed. Finally, while Bon has documented the Venetian fortifications on Acrocorinth, the significant remains of the Venetian fortifications elsewhere in the Korinthia have only not received systematic attention (Lampakes, "Cristianikai Kegkrea...", " in *Miscellanea di Archeologia, Storia, e Filologia dedicata al Prof. Antonino Salinas* (Palermo 1907), 71-80); Bon, *Corinth I*, iii, 153-155, *Corinth I*, ii, 268-271; Fowler, *Corinth I*, i, 104-106; A. Bodo "Alte Plane von Athen und Korinth," *De Burgwart* 11 (1910) 105-110, figs. 66-70; check Lampakes on Kenchriai). Much of the system of Venetian earthen works has been destroyed by modern development and it appears that the more substantial system of built walls might soon suffer the same fate.

The fourth trip to Oneion was to correct an error in mapping from the previous season. We corrected the map of the northeast curtain wall and now it coincides with the GPS points and the distances and bearings taken from the geodetic marker. It is also substantially in agreement with the topography of the northern slope of the mountain.

The fifth and sixth trips up the mountain were to determine the exact route of the pass. The routes of my walk have been digitised in the GIS. From the north slope there is only one route into the pass. The pass must be reached from the east passing below the line of the Venetian fortification. It seems likely that the route through the mountain was along the western side of the steep ravine. A small section of what might be a retaining wall for a path was located at the southern end of the western side of the pass through the mountain. From the southern side of the pass, it becomes possible to descend toward Galataki in two ways. One, is to the west of the pass. It curls down a series of alluvial fans, none of which are particularly steep, until it

descends into a rema which opens onto the Galataki plain. The second descent from Oneion is directly to the south of the fortress. Walking from the pass, one would have to walk due east along the southern part of the Oneion heights. Just to west of the main fortifications on Oneion a long ridge descends gradually to the plains to the south of the mountain. The Extensive Teams investigation of the Pass One has yielded several important observations. First, the pass is a relatively easy and quick way to get from the Isthmia and Hexamilia basin to the area around Galataki. Walking the coastal road takes longer, and there is no reason to assume that coastal route was preferable for non-wheeled traffic in the pre-modern period. The Pass Two through Oneion remains fully within the viewshed of the ancient fortification and outside of the viewshed of the tower and fort at Stanotopi.

Some brief conclusions concerning the Oneion area are in order. The Oneion range forms the southern border of the intensive survey area (or at least the area most intensively surveyed the last three seasons). Determining the permeability of this boundary and the likely routes of travel is essential to understanding settlement within the Isthmia basin and Hexamilia basin. Understanding the Hellenistic fortification on the Hag. Demetios ridge, the features on Perdicaria, the Hag. Paraskevi area, and the areas surveyed on the slope of Oneion during the 1999 season will depend upon a careful assessment of the passes through Oneion. Second, the evidence for military activity in this area during three important periods of conflict and fortification in the Korinthia – the modern period, the Venetian period, and the Late Classical/Hellenistic period – hints that the passes through the mountain had importance during these three times. It might be valuable to consider why these three periods left evidence for military activity in the Oneion passes. It is possible that similar strategic or even tactical concerns led produced features related to military activities there. It is an ideal location to demonstrate how a diachronic survey can illuminate the landscape in ways that more traditional surveys, with foci on a limited range of periods might overlook.