

## THE 2008 TFAHR INTERNATIONAL FIELD SCHOOL, THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT BYLAZORA and THIS PUBLICATION

were made possible by generous financial assistance from the following:

#### MAJOR FUNDING

Sean and Stefanie Moore
Teresa Southwell
Joe and Lisa Turano
David and Lucia Warden
Michael Warden and Mercedes LeGrand

#### **DONATIONS**

Susie Doe, in memory of Ursula M. Hild Anita Doyle The ExxonMobil Foundation Russell and Maarit Harp Eulah Matthews Diane Mattly Richard Moiel and Kathy Poeppel William Neidinger Paul Sirota

#### CONTRIBUTIONS

Ira and Brenda Allen
Ford and Hazel Bankston
Sarah Glasscock
Robert and Dorothy Neidinger
Hobart and Barbara Osburn
Chris C. Pappas
Autry Ross
Stylus Productions

TFAHR also received invaluable assistance from the Sveti Nikole community, and would like to acknowledge:

The People's Museum of Sveti Nikole The Municipality of Sveti Nikole The Sveti Nikole Fire Brigade

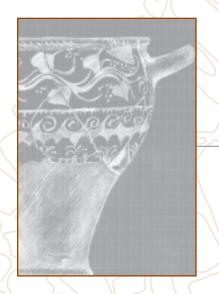
For more information about the

The Texas Foundation for Archaeological and Historical Research, visit our website at www.tfahr.org

or write to **TFAHR** 

PO Box 2688

Canyon Lake, TX 78133-0028 USA



THE 2008 EXCAVATION

# Bylazora

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

PUBLICATION OF

The Texas Foundation for Archaeological and Historical Research

September 2008 -- Canyon Lake, Texas



## Introduction

archaeologist with the Museum of Gevgelija, relayed an offer from Mr. Aleksandar Danev, Director of the People's Museum of Sveti Nikole, to Mrs. Eulah Matthews and Dr. William Neidinger of the Texas Foundation For Archaeological and Historical Research (TFAHR). That offer was for a co-operative venture to excavate an archaeological site near Sveti Nikole, in the Republic of Macedonia. The site, at the village of Knezje, is widely regarded by modern archaeologists to be the fabled city of Bylazora, the capital city of the Paionians, the people who inhabited ancient Macedonia before the arrival of the Macedonians. After discussions of logistics, finances, methodology, and responsibilities, TFAHR agreed to a long term co-operative effort to excavate Bylazora.

n January of 2008 Mr. Boban Husenovski, an

One of Mr. Danev's desires was to develop the Bylazora site as an archaeological training school for aspiring students and teachers. This dovetailed nicely with TFAHR's already established International Field School, which we had organized in previous years in our excavations in the Republic of Macedonia.

The TFAHR International Field School is an annual project in which TFAHR enables teachers, students, and volunteers from all over the world to participate

in archaeological excavations. The participants pay for their transportation to Macedonia, and TFAHR pays for their room, board, and equipment, as well as transportation on occasional field trips to other historical sites, and evening lectures. TFAHR's program is unique in this respect, differing from most summer archaeology programs where students and volunteers are seen as a source for unpaid labor or as a source of funds for professors' archaeological projects.

The participants in the TFAHR International Field School are involved in all aspects of the archaeological process from actual digging to documentation and pottery analysis. For the 2008 expedition to Bylazora TFAHR sponsored 33 teachers, students, and volunteers from 9 countries, and employed 12 workmen from Sveti Nikole and nearby villages. Not only was the 2008 Bylazora excavation an archaeological success, but the project was also able to make gains in international teamwork and understanding.

We have received numerous thanks from participants in the 2008 TFAHR International Field School and "alumni" from other years. We would like to pass those thanks on to those of you who have generously funded TFAHR to make these projects possible.



## Bylazora and The Paionians

he Paionians (also: Paeonians) were the people who inhabited Macedonia before the arrival of the ancient *Makedones* (Macedonians). When referring to "Macedonia" in this article, we mean the Vardar / Axios River basin that drains through the modern Republic of Macedonia and modern Greece. The ancient Greeks and Macedonians referred to the river as the Axios (Αξιος), as do the modern Greeks. Since the Middle Ages, Slavic-speakers and the Ottoman Turks called the same river the Vardar.

The earliest mention of the Paionians in ancient Greek literature is in Homer's Iliad, in which the Paionians appear as allies of the Trojans against the Greeks (Iliad II:848 seq.). Here Homer mentions the Paionians as being from Amydon on the "broad stream of the Axios," fighting with curved bows (again mentioned in Iliad X: 428 seq.), and being led by a certain Pyraichmes. Other Paionian heroes are mentioned, like Apisaon (Iliad XVII:348) and Asteropaios (Iliad XVII:351). Asteropaios seems to be the greatest of the Paionian warriors. In Iliad X:140-188 Asteropaios is described as a son of Pelegon (a son the river god Axios), from the fertile lands of the Paionians watered by the Axios. Asteropaios, a fighter with a long spear, newly arrived (just eleven days previous) at Troy, was slain by Achilles, along with a number of other Paionians. Traditionally the Paionian presence at Troy has been interpreted as two different Paionian tribes, from two different regions of the Axios Valley, led by two chieftains (Pyraichmes and Asteropaios), and arriving at two different times during the war. Such an interpretation would be entirely consistent with what is known about the Paionian tribal structure from later Greek sources.

Herodotus mentions, *inter alia*, some of the Paionians as living near the Strymon River (V:97), that the Paionians were originally from the Troad (V:14), and that Shah Xerxes abandoned some of his materiel and troops in

Paionia (VIII:115). Herodotus (V:12-17) also lists the names of various Paionian tribes and speaks of their subjugation at the hands of Darius' general, Megabazus.

Thucydides (II:99) mentions that before the Makedones left their ancestral homeland near the Pindos Mountains, the Paionians inhabited what would become the core of the ancient Macedonian Kingdom of Philip II and Alexander III. From Herodotus and Thucydides it seems that in the sixth century BC, some of the various Paionian tribes had become united under a single leadership, while others remained independent. The precise location of the homelands of many of the Paionian tribes is uncertain, and which of them were conquered by the Persians in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC is also a matter of dispute. What is certain is that the Paionians, at this time, were gradually coming into close contact with the Hellenic world, both through peaceful trade contacts as well as through military confrontation with the Macedonians, who themselves were being "Hellenized" at the same time.

The sixth century BC was a period of great power and importance for the Paionians, in whatever type of polity they may have organized themselves.



FIGURE 1.

Lands inhabited by the Paionians in the 6th century BC.

But the fifth and fourth centuries BC saw the gradual Macedonian conquest of the Paionian tribes. Amyntas I (reg. 540-498 BC) subjected the Paionian tribes west of the Axios all the way to the sea. Alexander I (reg. 498-454 BC) continued the conquest up the Axios River. There is no evidence, however, that the Macedonians exterminated or severely displaced the Paionians from their lands. Consequently, the Paionians might well have constituted a significant ethnic group within ancient Macedonia.

During the Peloponnesian War the Thracian warlord Sitalkes made his famous foray through the Axios Valley in 429 BC, laying siege to various of the Paionian-Macedonian riverine cities. Bylazora, while not explicitly mentioned by Thucydides, may well have been in Sitalkes' path. In any case, Sitalkes' campaign probably wrought significant destruction and displacement to the Paionian population and the Macedonian state.

In the wake of the Peloponnesian War, some of Paionia was united under native kings, while some Paionian tribes were allied with a weakened Macedonia, and other Paionians were still subject to Macedonia. In 359 BC the Paionian king Agis died and, shortly thereafter, Philip II attacked and conquered the Paionian kingdom. The exact status of the newly conquered Paionians under the Macedonians is uncertain. They appear (from numismatic evidence) to have retained their own kings, although they must have certainly had to contribute taxes and troops to Philip's army - grudgingly so, if Demosthenes and Isocrates are to be believed. In any case, the Paionian cavalry was highly respected and well integrated into the armies of Philip II and Alexander III.

With Alexander's death in 323 BC and the subsequent disintegration of his empire, the Paionians finally broke free of Macedonia. In 315 BC Audoleon appears as an independent Paionian king, though still allied with the Macedonian king Cassander. The two kings conducted a joint military operation against a common enemy in 310 BC. As Alexander's successors (the *Diadochoi*) were declaring themselves "kings," so too did Audoleon assume the title of "king" (Βασιλευς) in 306 BC. For better or worse, Paionia was now fully a part of the Hellenic world and dragged into her fratricidal struggles. In short order, Audoleon's son, Ariston, was

dethroned in 285 BC and forced into exile amongst the Dardanians, the barbaric northern neighbors of the Paionians and Macedonians. Another catastrophe was about to descend upon Paionia, the invasion of the Gauls. In 280/279 BC a massive migration of warlike Gauls swept through Paionia and Macedonia before they were finally defeated by the Greeks at Delphi. The ancient literary sources are silent regarding the damage inflicted upon Paionia by the Gauls, but numismatic and epigraphic evidence from Delphi and Olympia indicates a continued succession of Paionian kings (Leon, Dropion), a continued independence from Macedonia, and a new Paionian political organization, the Paionian Koinon (Κοινον Παιονων). The koinon was becoming popular amongst the Greek city-states at this time. Koinon implies a league, with a dominant entity uniting and guiding a coalition of allied yet fairly autonomous entities. We might imagine such a league of Paionian tribes and cities under Dropion.

Then around 230 BC the Paionians found themselves wedged between the Dardanians to the north and the Macedonians to the south. What remained of the Paionian state was alternately attacked and occupied by the Dardanians and then the Macedonians. In 217 BC, according to Polybius (V:97), the Macedonian Philip V conquered and occupied Bylazora to secure the roads leading from the land of the Dardanians through Paionia to Macedonia. Polybius describes Bylazora as the largest city of the Paionians and one commanding the surrounding roads (**Figure 2**).

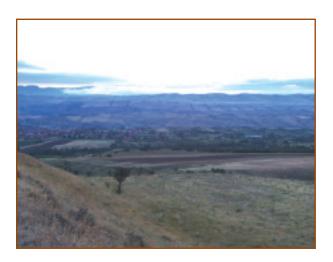


FIGURE 2.
Bylazora at dawn;
Sveti Nikole in the plains below.

Paionia now became the battleground between the Dardanians and the Macedonians, until the final defeat of the Dardanians by Philip V near Stobi. From then on, Paionia became a *strategia* (province ruled by a general) in the Macedonian Kingdom. The Paionian ethnic identity persisted, however, as a Paionian cavalry unit is mentioned fighting with the Macedonians against the Romans as late as 171 BC (Livy XLII: 51.v). But with Rome's conquest of Macedonia, Paionia as a polity ceased to exist on any level whatsoever. How long the Paionians as a distinct people survived is not known. The remembrance of the Paionians lasted until late Republican and early Imperial times when Polybius, Livy, Strabo, and Pausanias wrote of these legendary peoples.

The city of Bylazora receives scant mention in ancient sources; it is mentioned by Polybius and Livy, but neither described it in detail nor precisely located it. Most modern archaeologists and historians had associated Bylazora with (Titov) Veles, a large city in the center of

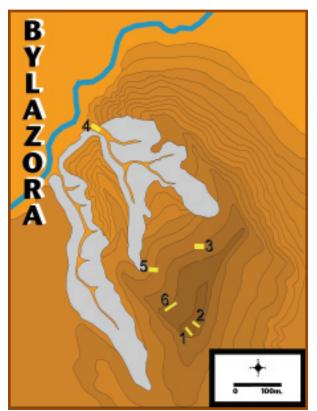
the Republic of Macedonia. The association was made on a rather superficial similarity between the names. And although an ancient site has been discovered at Veles, it appears far too small (3.5 hectares) to be Bylazora.

In 1976 Dr. Ivan Mikulcic suggested investigating a site near the town of Sveti Nikole. Four kilometers north of Sveti Nikole is the village of Knezje, where a plateau of 19.6 hectares commands the surrounding plains and roads. The lay of the land and a collection of artifacts suggested that this site might be the fabled Bylazora. Exploratory soundings in the 1980s and 1990s uncovered architectural and ceramic evidence that seemed to confirm Mikulcic's suggestion.

In 2008 TFAHR was invited by the People's Museum of Sveti Nikole to begin a systematic excavation of the site which many now believe is the Bylazora of the Paionians. This is our first season's report.







## THE 2008 EXCAVATION SEASON AT BYLAZORA

he TFAHR excavation team arrived at Bylazora knowing that previous soundings had been conducted in the 1980s and 1990s; that some of these soundings had been filled in; that other of these soundings had turned into ravines after considerable erosion; and

that there had been some clandestine digging at the site over the years. We were determined to make use of these circumstances to facilitate our excavation of the site. We divided the plateau of Bylazora into six sectors, based partially on the digging that had been done previously and partially upon some prominent features in the terrain. Work at Bylazora proceeded smoothly throughout the month of June. But on July 3 a torrential downpour and an accompanying hail storm wrought a great deal of damage to our work. Continuous rains in late July finally brought an early end to the excavation season. Although the rains were, at the time, a much maligned and unwanted occurrence, the rain damage to our trenches did lead us finally to some unexpected and spectacular discoveries.

#### SECTORS 1 AND 2

A simple visual sighting is all that is necessary to determine the highest points on the acropolis of Bylazora (**Figure 2**). Three narrow soundings (2.5 x 10 meters) were set down on the three highest points, where there also seemed to be some possibility of underlying ancient walls. But we struck sterile soil in all three soundings, without encountering a single ancient sherd or artifact. In Sector 1 the sounding was dug to a depth beneath the surface of nearly 2.0 meters. We found no ancient artifacts; there was one modern sardine can at a depth of .80 meter, but otherwise, nothing but clean gravel, clay and sand (**Figure 3**). Finds in other sectors called us away from Sectors 1 and 2, but the anomaly of the acropolis' heights being piled high with sterile soil will certainly bear examination in later seasons.

.....



FIGURE 3.
Sterile soil in Sector 1 sounding.

#### SECTORS 5 AND 6

In both of these sectors soundings had been sunk in previous years, and the remnants of ancient walls as well as ancient ceramics were discovered. Over the years, however, the exposed trenches collapsed and the yearly rains eroded the trenches into small ravines. Near an earlier sounding in Sector 5 we opened a new trench and almost immediately beneath the surface encountered the remains of an ancient structure. From the thin nature of the walls, we surmised that this was a private dwelling. A great mass of stone and terracotta vessels remained scattered on the beaten earth floor. Since the work in Sector 5 was on the edge of a badly eroded precipice, we halted work here after removing the artifacts and documenting the walls.

Work in Sector 6 involved expanding a previously excavated and subsequently deteriorated sounding and connecting it with a suspicious depression between two small hillocks. Running along the depression and beneath the level of the previous sounding was the foundation of a massive wall nearly 3.00 meters thick.



FIGURE 4.
Foundations of a massive wall in Sector 6.

Its extant remains varied from one to three courses high, the lower stones being quite large (some,  $1.0 \times 1.75$  meters), and the higher stones being somewhat smaller, suggesting that this structure is the foundation of a large defensive wall (**Figure 4**). Walls constructed with smaller stones are visible in the balks of the trench at higher levels. Twice rains filled in the trenches of Sector 6, causing us to postpone its full excavation to another season. There is a possibility that the wall of Sector 6 eventually connects with another massive defensive wall we uncovered in Sector 3. This, too, will be the task of another season.

#### SECTOR 4

In the early 1990s quarrying work was being conducted into the edges of the hills that comprise the northern slopes of the acropolis of Bylazora; the gravel and sand of these primordial hills was being mined for road base material. During the quarrying operations, machines uncovered a solidly built ancient structure. The extant structure measures 9 x 14 meters, and is a subterranean stone walled building with a descending stone staircase. The courses of the walls are of finely cut ashlars, some of which appear to be in secondary use, having been pillaged from other buildings in antiquity. Some stones were quite irregularly cut to fit them into the walls (Figure 5). In 1994 the structure was partially excavated and a protective awning placed over it. Between 1994 and 2008, the awning was vandalized and collapsed, stones were quarried out, and the structure again partially filled with water, mud, stones, and vegetation (Figure 6).



FIGURE 5.

Irregularly carved stones in the structure of Sector 4; note the putlog hole in the uppermost stone in the center.



FIGURE 6.
Sector 4 as we found it in June, 2008.

The nature of this structure is a matter of some controversy. It has been called by different archaeologists at different times a tomb, a pool, a towered reservoir that was part of the city defenses, and a ritual bath. We hoped that by completing the excavation down to the structure's bottom, we might get a clearer idea about it. After a decade's worth of vegetation was chopped down, mud removal began. After most of the mud was extracted, water from a nearby creek began seeping in. The Sveti Nikole Fire Brigade lent their pumping expertise to drain the water (**Figure 7**).



FIGURE 7. Draining Sector 4.

We determined that the twenty-second step was the lowest extant step of the structure. By the simple expedient of sticking one's arm deep down into the muck, it was possible to ascertain that the twenty-second step rested on dirt (mud) and that there was no stone foundation beneath it. The courses of the western wall, however, continued down at least a half an arm's length. Our plan was to allow the soil at the bottom of the structure to dry out and then put down a few narrow soundings to further explore the substructure. That was how we left things on the afternoon of July 3. That night the rains arrived with an unparalleled ferocity (according to the locals) and washed away a month's work (Figure 8). Only once the structure is properly covered and protected from run-off can we resume a proper excavation of the building.



FIGURE 8. Sector 4 on the morning of July 4, 2008.

.....

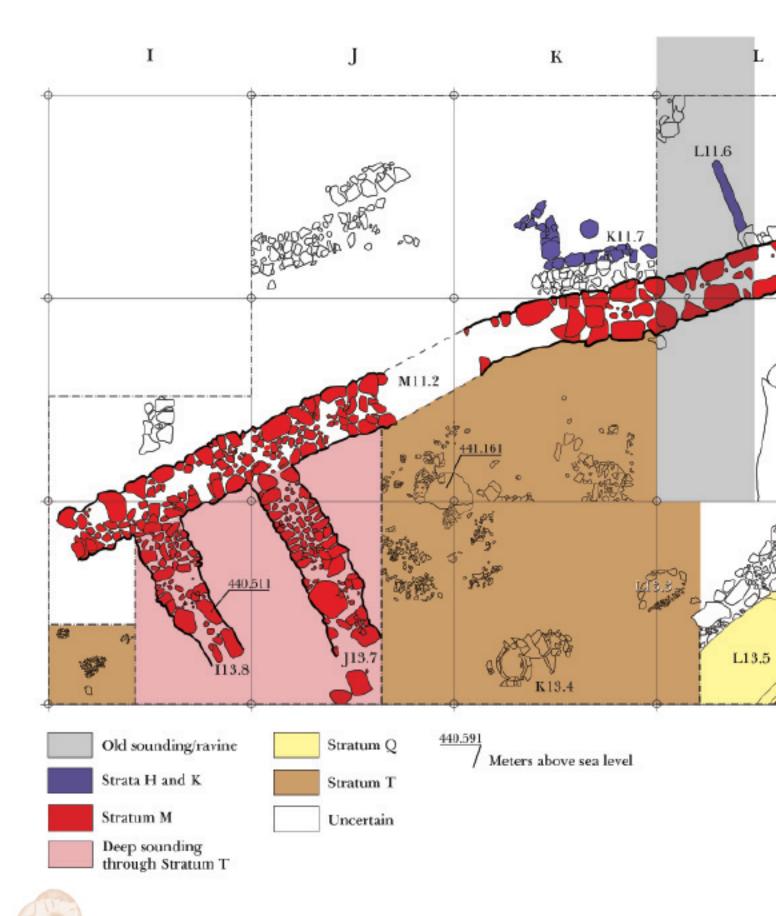


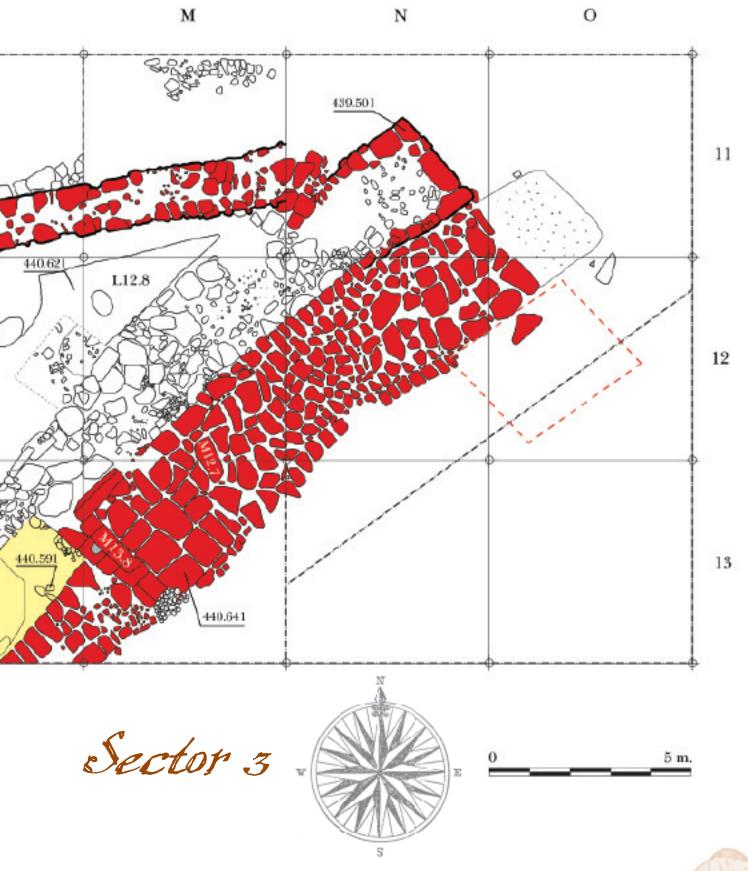
FIGURE 9. KEP inscription.

Along the eastern wall of the structure there is an inscription in Greek characters, KEP (**Figure 9**). Whether it is a Greek or Paionian word is not known, and whether it is contemporary with the building of the structure or later is also not known. There are putlog holes on both the east and west walls at approximately the same level; but they are not across from one another, meaning that they could not have supported putlogs that spanned the structure (**Figure 10**). What will help us determine the nature of the building is not only a series of soundings inside the structure, but several trenches excavated around it to see if it is connected with any other buildings. Our plan is to conduct these soundings in 2009.



FIGURE 10.
Lateral wall; some stones re-used.
Notice putlog holes.





#### SECTOR 3

In June and July of 2008 TFAHR spent most of its time and effort working in Sector 3. Previous excavators had dug a single sounding in this section of the acropolis, discovering a 2.0 meter stretch of wall; the wall was built sturdily enough to have served as a defensive wall of the acropolis. Subsequently, people began robbing stones from the ancient wall and the trench had to be partially back filled in 1995. What was not filled back in eroded away into a small gulley, leaving behind a backwash of ancient and modern material. We decided to lay down a grid over the area, to clear a further section along the top of the wall (M11.2), and to excavate (on grid) to the north and to the south of wall M11.2 (Figure 11).



FIGURE 11.
Uncovering the northern defensive wall (M11.2) of the acropolis.

Since we have excavated less than 500 square meters of a nearly 20 hectare (200,000 m²) site, and have reached bedrock nowhere, it would be premature to start assigning definitive stratigraphical designations to our discoveries. Consequently, in this publication we will assign, from the middle of the alphabet, letters to indicate the relative chronology of the strata we uncovered, "A" being earliest and "Z" being latest. Moreover, we will skip over letters, so potential future discoveries might be properly assigned. Occasionally the ceramic evidence aids us in determining the absolute date of a stratum. See plan on pages 10 and 11.

STRATUM H. The earliest architectural remains discovered in Sector 3 were found in squares K11 and L11, where the scant and fragile remnants of small buildings were unearthed. Unfortunately, much of what remained was destroyed when the 1990s sounding eroded into a small gulley, when people began pillaging stones from wall M11.2, and when the 1990s sounding was filled in. The remains of one of the ancient buildings consist of the base of a mudbrick wall (L11.6) and a clay and beaten-earth floor built up against the wall. A thick deposit of ash lay atop the wall and floor (Figure 12). To the east of wall L11.6, at a slightly higher level than the floor, was a stratum of roof tile fragments, presumably from this building. The tiles are of the "classical type," a fine fabric with a red slip.

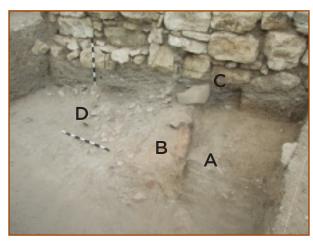


FIGURE 12.

A) clay floor, B) mudbrick wall L11.6,
C) ash deposit, D) roof tiles.

Due to both the modern natural and man-made damage done after the 1990s and to the subsequent fill-in, the artifacts recovered from square L11 were a veritable jumble: local ceramics of the 6th - 2nd centuries BC, black glaze pottery of the 5th century BC, a modern Snickers wrapper, and an ancient fibula. Since this backfill rested right on top of the ancient floor, none of the ceramic evidence is useful in dating the building. Hopes of dating it by digging through the floor were dashed when the July rains turned this section of the excavation into a muddy pool.

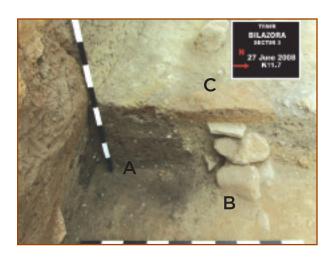


FIGURE 13. A) ash layer, B) wall K11.7, C) decayed mudbrick.

**STRATUM K.** Before the July deluge, we were able to open an adjacent trench, K11, which fortuitously had not been damaged by the sounding, ravine, and modern pillaging. In it we found the extension of the ash layer lying atop the floor in L11. Cutting into this ash layer was a small wall (K11.7) whose three extant courses were built of smooth field stones. **Figure 13** shows clearly how K11.7 cuts into the ashy material of the building of stratum H. The reddish material above the field stones is the remains of burnt mudbrick. Wall K11.7 makes a double dogleg jag as it runs east to west. After the second bend it cuts through a pit (K11.11), from which bone fragments and roof tile sherds were extracted, but no securely dateable ceramic material (**Figure 14**).

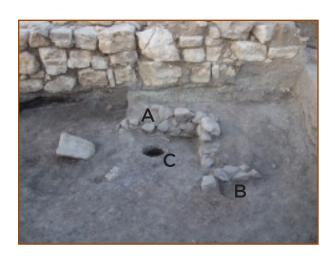


FIGURE 14. A) wall K11.7, B) pit K11.11 and C) pit K11.12.

.....

Another pit (K11.12) contained larger bone fragments and a great quantity of ash; this pit seems to have been purposely filled with reddish brown sandy soil. Perhaps it was a refuse burn pit that eventually had to be sealed.

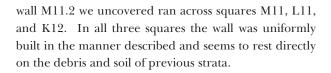
We have separated into two distinct strata the buildings represented by walls L11.6 and K11.7 because the latter cuts into the former, indicating its construction is later. And although we have skipped assigning strata I and J, for reasons mentioned above, we currently believe that Stratum K does follow pretty closely upon Stratum H. To assign an absolute chronological date to these strata is, however, at this point impossible due to the abandonment of these trenches after the early July rains. In 2009 we may have better luck and be able to systematically excavate north of wall M11.2. In any case, the remains of the buildings of these strata do appear to have been cut into when wall M11.2 was constructed. More than likely, the buildings were already in ruins when M11.2 was built.

**STRATUM M.** The main architectural features of this stratum are the large wall M11.2 (and two walls associated with it), and the ramp M12.7 with its various associated walls. As soon as both the wall and the ramp were discovered, one of our main objectives was to uncover that exact point where the two intersected. Unfortunately, we did not uncover that point until the afternoon of the last day of the excavation; its clearer elucidation awaits another season. We shall discuss Stratum M in two parts, which are the two stories of uncovering the wall and then the ramp.

STRATUM M: WALL M11.2. In 1994 a small sounding on the acropolis revealed the stones of what we came informally to call "the northern defensive wall of the acropolis." The sounding was subsequently partially refilled after illicit quarrying of the stones took place. In June of 2008 we returned to the site of the sounding, now a small ravine. We laid a grid over the area, and cleared a further extent of the wall. At its best preserved section M11.2 is extant to a height of four courses (Figure 15). In square L11 a subterranean foundation-leveling course is also extant (A in Figure 15). Some of the stones of M11.2 are quite large, and are held in place and shimmed by smaller rough cut stones. Mud and clay were used to bond the large and small stones. The wall is about 1.0-1.20 meters thick. The first stretch of



FIGURE 15.
Wall M11.2 uncovered on the first week of the dig; notice the foundation course (A).



When we opened squares J12 and I12 to follow the wall westwards, we noticed three distinct changes. First, the direction of the wall shifted from a 10° angle off of perfect east-west to a 45° angle. Second, the stones of M11.2 in squares J12 and I12 were decidedly smaller and, consequently, more abundant. The thickness of the wall remained about the same. Third, a leveling course of sand, gravel and clay (with some ancient sherds and tile fragments) was laid down before the wall was built here, as if to raise the level of the terrain at this spot (**Figure 16**). Whether the changes in this section of the wall represent a repair to a damaged section of wall, or simply an accommodation to the terrain requiring a different construction technique, is uncertain at present.

The highest extant course of large stones of wall M11.2 was fairly uniform across both sections of the wall; there were no large stones lying about the wall indicating collapse from natural catastrophe or from human pillaging. This might be an indication that the upper courses of the wall were made of less substantial material, like mudbrick. We shall return to wall M11.2 later in the report.

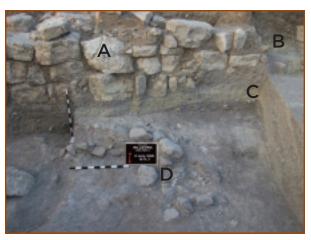


FIGURE 16. A) wall M11.2, B) stones missing where M11.2 veers off at a different angle,
C) leveling course of sand and gravel,
D) wall K11.7 of an earlier stratum.

**STRATUM M: RAMP M12.7.** The discovery of the ramp was fortuitous, one of the few accidental benefits of the July 3 downpour. We had been excavating a solid plaster floor (L12.8) in squares M11, M12, and L12 (**Figure 17**). The plaster floor was bordered on the north by the defensive wall M11.2; to the southeast it abutted a badly vandalized wall (M12.6) whose stones were every bit as large as those in wall M11.2. In fact, given the robbed out nature of wall M12.6, we even postulated at one point that the stones of M12.6 may have been quarried

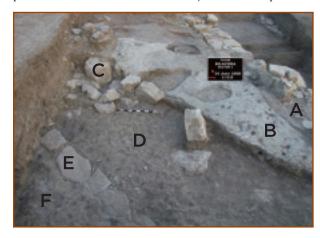


FIGURE 17.
A) wall M11.2, B) plaster floor L12.8,
C) wall M12.6, D) "street," E) "curbstones," and F) corner of trench M12.

away to build M11.2. Further to the southeast of M12.6 lay a clear swath of hard packed soil and then a line of well-laid stones. We thought the clear swath might be a street or alley abutting the building with the plaster floor, and the line of stones a curb. Since the "street-and-curb combination" was running northeast towards wall M11.2, we were elated, hoping that at their intersection might be a gate. Then came the July 3 downpour.

We were apprehensive upon returning to the field. The rains had washed away a lot of the previous month's work; they also washed away our "street-and-curb" hypothesis. What was a dirt street on July 2 was now revealed to be a thin layer of hard-packed soil atop a mass of tightly packed large and small stones nearly 3.0 meters wide (measured from the plaster floor to the "curb"). This was wider than wall M11.2 itself and certainly far too wide for a building with a simple plaster floor.

We then decided to start clearing the mud from the "curb" and from the corner of trench M12. The stones of the "curb" were higher than the "street." This much we expected. But as we cleared more spoil from the corner of the trench, we found not the remains of some building, but one large, flat stone after the next. At first we thought, "a sidewalk." But our "sidewalk" kept getting larger and larger.

About a week after the rains, another of our trenches, M13, which had been turned into a nearly two-meter deep muddy pool, finally dried out enough to resume excavations (Figure 18). Having dug through a few inconclusive patches of roof tiles and wattle-and-daub, we finally hit a line of large, well-cut stones, in a northwest to southeast alignment (M13.8). An adjoining stone had a square socket hole cut into it, and rut marks across some of the stones indicated wheeled traffic at some point (Figure 19). We realized immediately that we were down upon a threshold of some sort. The question was, "a threshold to what?"

As we excavated to the north and south of the threshold stones, we uncovered more large, flat pavers similar to those in square M12. Since there was a distinct difference in the level of the pavers in the two trenches, we were certain that we were on a paved street or ramp that followed the natural incline of the ancient acropolis. We immediately opened the remaining trenches that

.....



FIGURE 18.
Uncovering the threshold M13.8.



FIGURE 19.
Discovering the socket in M13.8.

would give us an unobstructed view of the ramp and expose the point of intersection between the ramp and wall M11.2 (**Figure 20**).

The ramp, from the threshold to its northern end where it intersects with wall M11.2, is about 13 meters long and about 3 meters wide. The ramp's stones are in excellent condition, although a few border stones have been robbed away; but generally everything is intact. The pavers are largest nearest the threshold and nearest the intersection with the wall M11.2. Little ceramic evidence was found atop the ramp, although there was a considerable quantity of animal bones (cow, sheep,



FIGURE 20. The threshold and ramp.



FIGURE 21. Roof tiles above the ramp.

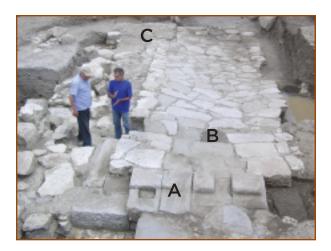


FIGURE 22. A) threshold M13.8, B) ramp, C) foundations of a square tower. Dr. Ivan Mikulcic (left).

and pig primarily) and an unusually large and constant amount of roof tiles (Figure 21). Since we rarely found roof tiles to either side of the ramp, we believe that this may have been a covered ramp. In square N11, where ramp met wall, a quadrangle of ashlars, finely cut on the exteriors, was uncovered. Perhaps this is the remnant of the foundation of a tower that flanked the ramp and wall (Figure 22). To the southeast of the ramp, where one would expect a similar flanking tower, the stones had clearly been robbed away. In fact, all along the southeastern edge of the ramp there was a complete lack of stones, an indication of ancient quarrying operations. In square O11, the ramp ends rather unceremoniously in a patch of thick ash and animal bones. A damaged conical stone with a round socket hole may have been some pivot stone for a door or gate. The rest of squares N11 and O11 will be cleared in the 2009 season. Near threshold M13.8 many of the well-cut stones of the threshold itself and the pavers had been stolen in antiquity.

So, we have a well built ramp leading up from the acropolis wall to a threshold. The threshold shows sign of vehicular traffic and the square socket hole is probably the lock socket for the beam to secure a large, two-door gate. The circular socket holes in which the doors rotated to open and closed positions have been robbed away. The large quantity of roof tiles found atop the ramp and not off to the sides suggests that the ramp was roofed. Large pavers continued into the balks of trenches L13 and M13. That means that whatever structure the ramp led to, its foundations may still be intact in squares L14 and M14. But that is a matter for the 2009 excavation season.

Several guesses have been offered about what lies south of the threshold. With good reason no one wants to go into print with his or her name attached to any hypothesis, but we all found it impossible not to speculate. One theory is that we are on the threshold (literally) of a temple. The ash and bones to the north of the ramp hint at an altar.

A covered ramp certainly suggests something more than a common entrance to the acropolis. Another suggestion is that the ramp leads up to an important civic building or the residence or hall of some high official. Another theory is that the ramp leads to a propylon, a ceremonial

entrance gateway to the agora or forum of the acropolis of Bylazora. 2009 will tell.

A triangular plaster floor (L12.8) wedged between wall M11.2 and wall L12.10 seems to be contemporary with the ramp-threshold-defensive wall complex (**Figure 17**). Two pits (L12.9 and M12.5) were dug into the floor to hold pithoi. And large pithoi fragments were retrieved from L12.9. It is not certain, however, whether the pits are contemporary or later than the plaster floor.

Since at no point did we lift the stones of the ramp or threshold to dig deeper, we have no material from a sealed stratum to give us a *terminus post quem* by which we can date the structure. But we might just have a *terminus ante quem*.

**STRATUM Q.** At a certain point in time this rampbuilding complex was destroyed and the people of Bylazora began carrying away the stones to use in other structures. (It should be noted that several of the stones of the ramp-building complex themselves seem to have been re-used from earlier buildings.) Our current working hypothesis is that after its initial destruction, remnants of the building associated with the threshold were still standing and that squatters moved into the ruins. That brings us to locus L13.5, our Stratum Q (Figure 23).

Some time after the destruction of the threshold-building and the robbing away of some of its stones, people found shelter in the remaining ruins. Using a surviving wall (L12.10) as one part of their habitation, the wall incorporating the threshold as another, they built a crude clay and mudbrick wall right along what remained of the ramp to provide a third wall. The fourth wall lies in square L14 waiting to be uncovered. In this squatter house, nestled amongst the ruins of the once splendid ramp and public building, a small hearth was constructed.

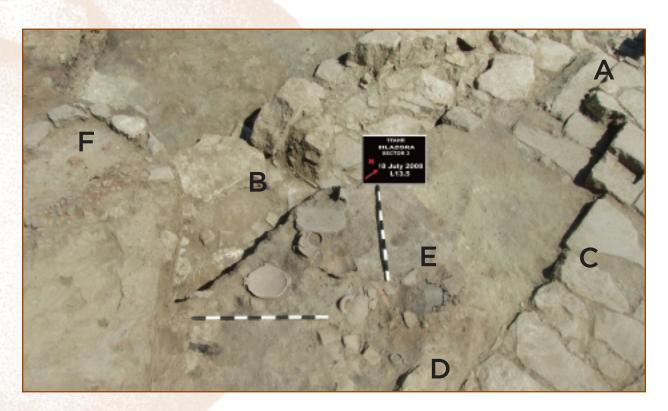


FIGURE 23. A) threshold, B) wall L12.10, probably a wall associated with the threshold-building, C) floor of the structure behind the threshold, D) clay wall, E) squatters' kiln and associated pottery of Stratum Q, F) squatters' kiln of Stratum T. Approximately .60 meter separates Stratum Q and Stratum T.

TFAHR members have excavated this type of simple hearth numerous times in numerous places; it is often referred to as a "nomad fire pit," or a "Bedouin oven," or a "squatters' hearth," or a "transient's fireplace." By whatever name, the manner of construction is similar: a ring of stones encircles the fire, small round field stones are packed tightly into the embers, and, if a baking surface is desired, clay is spread (and then hardened) over the field stones. Though interesting and adding a human touch to the history of Bylazora, the hearth itself does not provide us with a *terminus ante quem* by which

we can date the ruins of the ramp-building on which it was built. But the pottery surrounding the hearth in the squatters' house can. A great deal of stone and terracotta pottery was retrieved from the beaten earth floor of the squatters' house (**Figure 24**). The bulk of the identifiable ceramics is dateable to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC. That means that if the squatters' house is dateable to the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC, then the ramp-building complex had to have been both built and destroyed before that time.



FIGURE 24. Pottery from the "Squatters' House."

**STRATUM T:** About .60 meter of soil accumulated above the squatters' house of locus L13.5 before evidence of the next habitation appears. And it is another squatters' hearth, L13.3 (**Figure 23**). Though larger, it was built in a similar fashion; but we found no pottery associated with it. Hardened mud washes which lapped up against the stones of this hearth suggest that whatever building in which this oven was built may have been open to the south. A similar hearth was discovered in square I13 at a comparable level.

As we excavated to the south of M11.2 in squares I13, J12, J13, K12, and K13 we uncovered a most unusual situation. At approximately .30 meter beneath the surface all across these squares we found beaten earth floors at a consistent level throughout, large caches of pottery, roof tiles, frequent irregular piles of burnt mudbrick, but no walls (**Figure 25**).

Granted, wall M11.2 served as a one wall for whatever structure or structures roofed all this, but a complete lack of lateral north-south walls across a space of nearly 18 meters was perplexing, to say the least. The hearths,

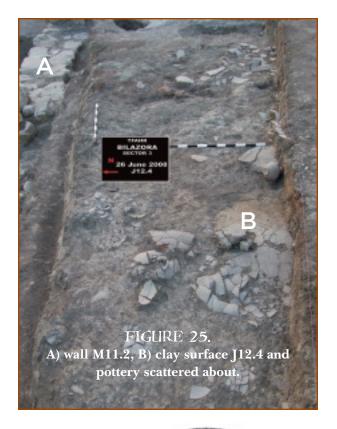




FIGURE 26. Pottery from Stratum T.

a large pithos (K13.4), the floors with all the pottery certainly were not open to the elements; to say nothing of the evidence of the roof tiles. The enigma of the building without walls awaits a more thorough cleaning of the beaten earth floors in next season's work.

Straddling the intersection of squares J13, J12, K13, and K12 was a large clay surface (J12.4). At first we thought it might be a floor, but when its nearly perfect circular shape emerged after cleaning, we began referring to it as a table. It may, of course, be altogether something else, like a baking surface. But what was most rewarding was the large quantity of vessels found surrounding J12.4. Eventually the remains of about 25 vessels were recovered. They date to the late third century BC (**Figure 26**).

The remains of Stratum T are close to the surface. Considering that the acropolis was a village wheat field and regularly worked by tractors until its appropriation by the state a short time ago, it seems unlikely that any later remains are going to be unearthed in Sector 3.

**RETURN TO STRATUM M:** On the last week of the excavation season we decided to cut through a section of this expanse of "wall-less" floor surface of Stratum T where the least amount of pottery was found, in squares I13 and J13. Almost immediately we unearthed two thick walls (I13.8 and J13.7) jutting out from M11.2. Both walls were constructed of stones smaller than those used in M11.2 but both walls were definitively integrated into the larger acropolis wall. Moreover, both walls seem



FIGURE 28.
Bylazora and the surrounding countryside.



FIGURE 27.
Uncovering walls I13.8 and J13.7 on a cold, wet July morning at Bylazora.

to be built into the same sandy gravel and clay that was used to raise the level of the terrain in the extension of the acropolis wall in I12 and J12 (**Figure 27**). The late July rains precluded our full excavation of these two walls. So, it remains unclear what kind of edifice is built into the acropolis wall. Another mystery for 2009.



The first season's excavation has given us some rough topographical and chronological parameters for future work at Bylazora. Expanded work in Sectors 3, 4, 5, and 6 is definitely in order for the 2009 season. TFAHR will give priority to uncovering the area south of the ramp and threshold. Work also needs to be done in uncovering the earlier strata of Bylazora.

The ramp-building's destruction predates *ca.* 400 BC, the date of the squatters' house. It will be necessary to dig beneath the ramp-building to determine its contruction date and whether it is a fifth century BC rebuilding of an earlier structure. The destruction of Stratum T in the late third century BC corresponds to what we know about the final days of Bylazora and the city's demise at the hands of the Macedonians, Dardanians, Gauls, and finally the Romans.

In subsequent seasons we hope to flesh out the history and topography of Bylazora, the fabled capital city of the Paionians.

### THE TEXAS FOUNDATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

thanks the following participants in our 2008 excavations:

#### THE TFAHR INTERNATIONAL FIELD SCHOOL

Lucie Broncova (Czech Republic) Viktoria Chystyakova (Ukraine) Tomas Davidov (Slovakia) Amy Donaldson (Australia) Adela Dornakova (Czech Republic)

Padraic Emparan (California, USA)

Ivy Faulkner (Arizona, USA)

Ivy Faulkner (Arizona, USA)
Gail Gant (Texas, USA)
Jenny Jurica (Texas, USA)
Jana Kopackova (Czech Republic)

Veronika Kristofova (Slovakia) Karel Kut (Czech Republic) Jana Lohnicka (Czech Republic) Francis Malec (California, USA)

Mari Malmer (Norway) Eulah Matthews (Texas, USA) Diane Mattly (California, USA) Sonia McLaughlin (Canada) William Neidinger (Texas, USA) Joseph Noffsinger (Texas, USA) Nikolas Noffsinger (Texas, USA) Rose O'Sullivan (Australia) Matej Pavlacky (Czech Republic) Magnus Persson (Sweden)

Nicholas Shelden-Setten (Washington, USA)

Paul Sirota (Texas, USA)

Adela Soukupova (Czech Republic) Teresa Southwell (Texas, USA) Jo-Simon Stokke (Norway) Petra Tuslova (Czech Republic) Tatiana Votroubekova (Slovakia) Jakub Zezule (Czech Republic)

#### AND OUR MACEDONIAN COLLEAGUES

Aleksandar Danev

Stefan Danev

Boban Husenovski

Zvonimir Nikolovski

#### Workers from Sveti Nikole and Knezje:

Grozde Davidov, Dejan Dimovski, Angel Gligorov, Stojce Jakimov, Sase Kostadinov,

Dalibor Maney, Panev Milorad, Nikolce Sandey, Goran Stamenkovski,

Zoran Stamenkovski, Filip Stojkovski, Mishko Tosev

#### **2008 PUBLICATION CREDITS**

Text: William Neidinger and Eulah Matthews

Photographs: Eulah Matthews, William Neidinger, Aleksandar Danev

Cover Photo/Inside Back Cover Photo: Boban Husenovski

Finds Drawings: Teresa Southwell Site Plans: Amy Donaldson

Additional Maps: Robert Neidinger, William Neidinger

Pottery Identification: Boban Husenovski

Publication Design and Layout: Teresa Southwell

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Petrova, E. Paeonia. Skopje, 1999.

Mikulcic, I. "Die Lage von Bylazora," Annuaire de la Faculte de

Philosophie de l'Universite de Skopje, Tome 2 (28), 1976.



TFAHR P.O. BOX 2688 CANYON LAKE, TX 78133-0028

