

Textile tools from the 2007 - 2010 survey at Ancient Eleon

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Introduction

- My research consisted of analyzing various categories of textile tools found during archaeological survey in preparation for its publication. This survey was conducted from 2007 to 2010 by the Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project (EBAP), at Eleon - located by Arma in Eastern Boeotia. EBAP is an ongoing research project based at UVic, that brings an international team of specialists together to explore the history and material culture of Boeotia.
- Textile implements collected included spindle whorls, loomweights, and miscellaneous reworked sherds. Spindle whorls assist the weaver with spinning previously gathered wool, cotton, or linen into thread, while loomweights ensured thread being woven was kept taught.
- Further analysis of each object's date in relation to their geographical findspots has led to specific discoveries regarding textile production at Eleon.



Figure 1

Figure 1; The Polygonal wall at Arma. (Courtesy of EBAP).

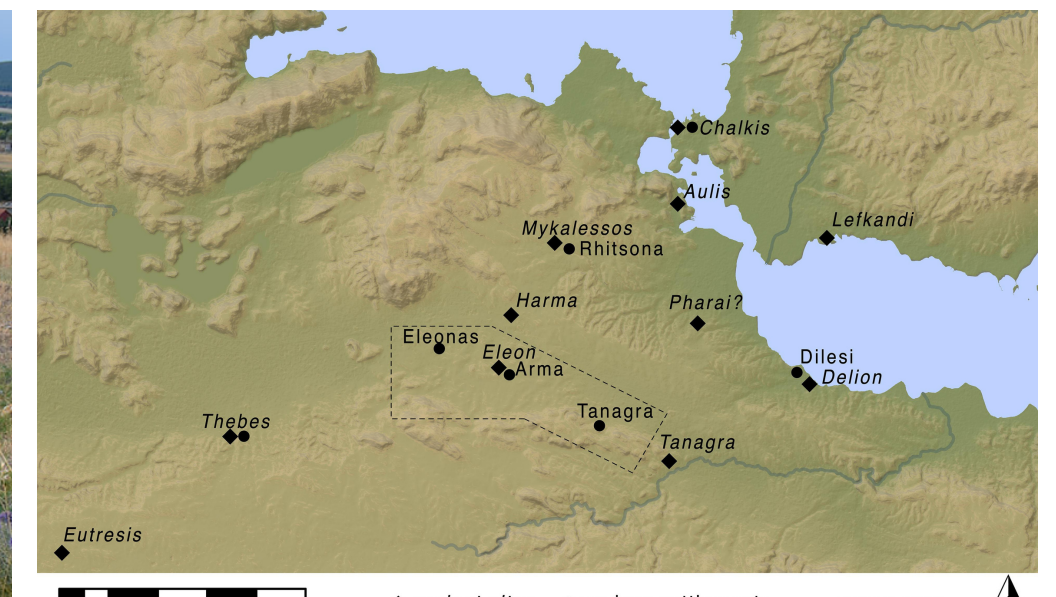


Figure 2

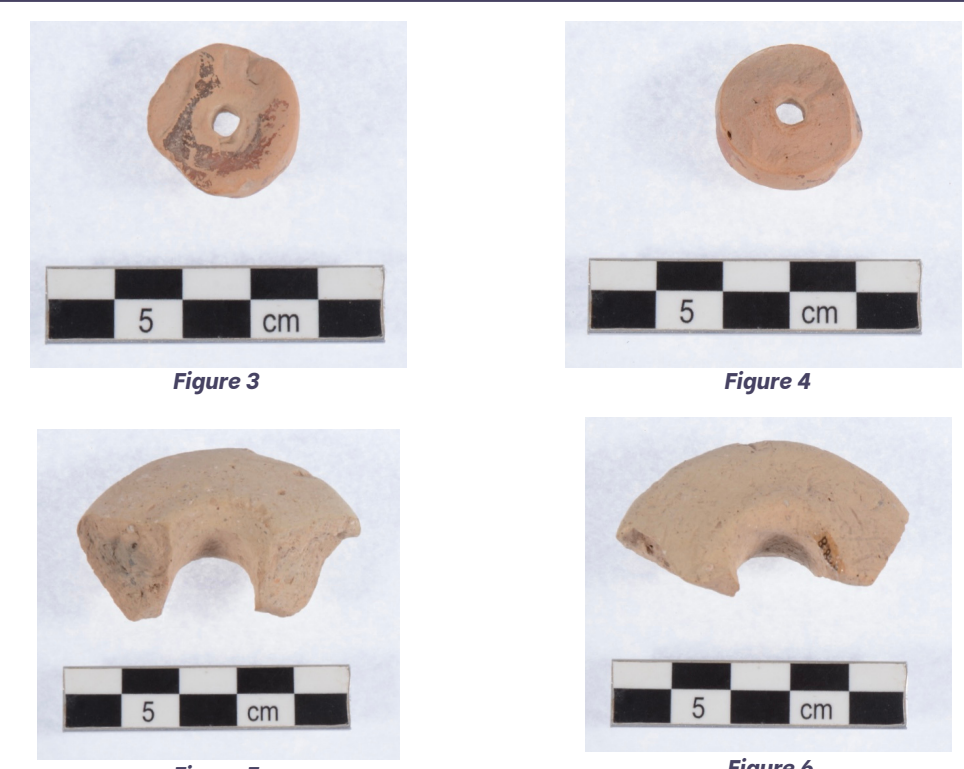
Figure 2; Eleon site location. (Courtesy of EBAP).

Objectives

- Analyze and assess each textile tool found during site survey
- Estimate the purpose each tool may have served in antiquity
- Date each object with adequate comparanda
- Prepare a technical report displaying my research and analysis

Methodology

- Objects were collected during a surface survey where field workers walked parallel transects spaced at 10 meter intervals. Survey units were mapped by hand-held GPS devices (Aravatinos et al. 2016).
- Primary research data was obtained from measuring, weighing, and physically assessing the fabric of each textile tool.
- Secondary data was gathered through literature review to ensure each object was dated correctly with accurate comparanda.



Figures 3 and 4; Sides 1 and 2 of B80.14. Figures 5 and 6; Sides 1 and 2 of B41.2. (B. Watts-Woolridge, courtesy of EBAP).

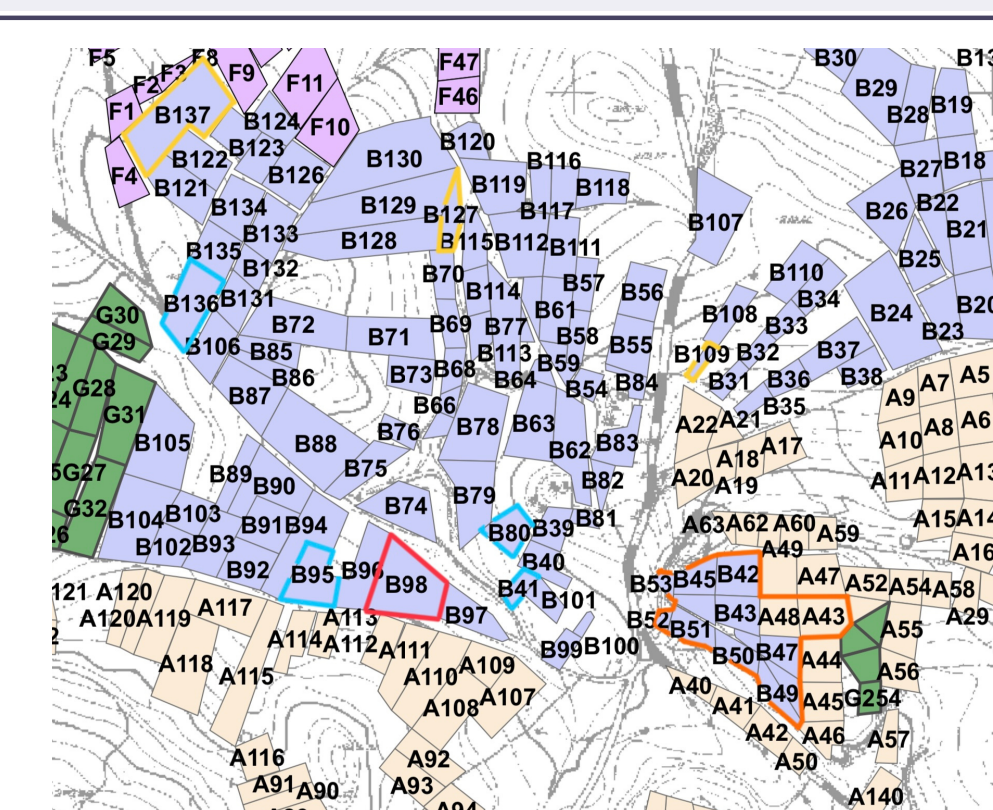


Figure 7

Figure 7; survey quadrants at Ancient Eleon - colourful outlines correspond to location and time period that each object was found. Acropolis is outlined in orange, the Classical Period is outlined in red, the Iron Age is outlined in blue, and undetermined is outlined in yellow (Dragushan 2022, base map Courtesy of EBAP)

Results and Analysis

- Quadrants B80 and B41 both produced textile tools from the Iron Age (see Fig. 7). These tools had very similar dimensions and weights, thus likely producing similar classes of thread. Furthermore, these two objects are the only tools in the data set that could have produced loosely-wound thread from sheep fibre. This evidence paints a clearer picture of the classes of thread and livestock availability in the Iron Age at Eleon.
- There were no major concentrations of loomweights that would suggest a specialized area for industrial scale textile production. The evidence does suggest that smaller-scale domestic activities were taking place.
- Loomweight B98.11 features an incised 'Alpha' on the base (see Fig. 8). This item was likely crafted in the owner's home - there are no clean edges or fine material that would indicate it was made by a professional potter using a mould. Grzybalska (2010) has described similar grades of pottery as typically belonging to poorer women. Additionally, Davidson (1952) notes that loomweights with incised letters were common in the 4th century. Comparing the incision on the base of B98.11 with other 4th century Alpha incisions dates this piece in the 4th century more securely.
- Moreover, one-third of the textile tools collected from survey have been created from re-purposed sherds (see B137.NT.2; Fig. 10), which speaks both to the availability of ceramics, and to the popularity of this practice.

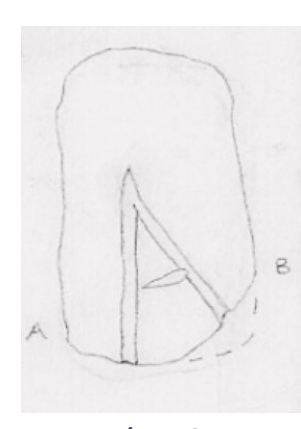


Figure 8

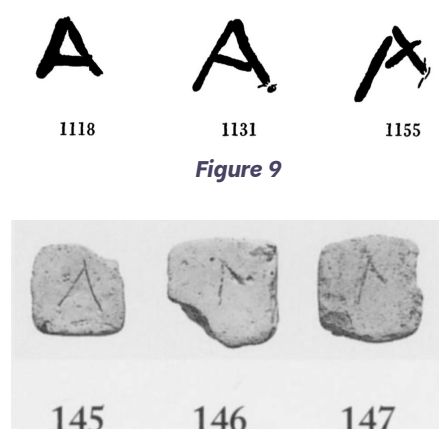


Figure 9

Figure 8; Incision on the base of B98.11 (Z. Wieler, courtesy of EBAP).
Figure 9; 4th century loomweight incisions from Davidson (1952).
Figure 10; late 4th century loomweight incisions from Merker (2006)

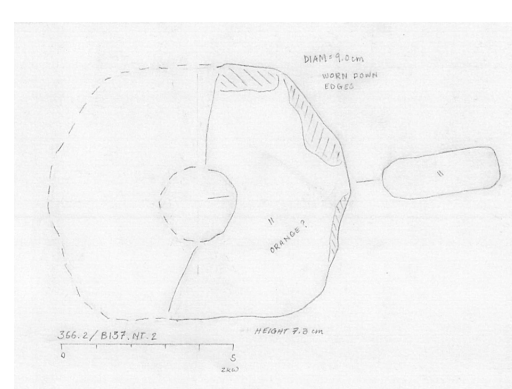


Figure 11

Figure 11; Drawing of B137.NT.2, a spindle whorl repurposed from a Laconian roof tile (Z. Wieler, courtesy of EBAP)

Conclusion

- In summary, the evidence for textile production at Eleon suggests that more spinning took place than weaving, although both activities were taking place throughout various eras at Eleon.
- For a more accurate and concise geographical picture of textile tool use at this site, one would need to cross-examine my findings from survey and previous textile tool studies from excavation at Eleon.



Figure 12

Figure 12; The Acropolis at Eleon (Courtesy of EBAP).

References

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