Local Antiquities in the Collective Memory of Rural Settlements: A Case Study from Boeotia

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Abstract

The following article is under the modern research scope that concerns the investigation of the relationship of local communities with the archaeological environment of their area. It focuses mainly on rural communities that are in the immediate vicinity of archaeological sites which have not been highlighted and projected. One such case is Aghios Georgios, a village of western Boeotia which belong to the Municipality of Levadia. In its territory belongs the archaeological site of ancient Koroneia, which was famous in antiquity because of the cult of Itonia Athena. In the present study, an attempt is made to highlight the perceptions of the inhabitants for their archaeological environment, to investigate whether they are influenced from the academic point of view and to detect the role of the local archaeological past in the formation of their collective and cultural memory. The research is mainly based on quantitative data supplemented in cases by qualitative ones.

Keywords: collective memory, local history, Boeotia, Koroneia, Aghios Georgios.

1. Introduction and the theoretical context

How modern local communities in Greece relate to their archaeological environment and see through the ancient past of their place has been an issue of research for both archaeologists and social anthropologists. Recent studies have shown the gap between local communities and "official archeology," as has been characterized the archeology of modernity, which is considered to be expressed and practiced by professional archaeologists and academics (Sutton & Strulia, 2010). Apart from "official archeology," however, other alternative, non-institutionalized forms are recognized, which concern the perceptions and practices of the inhabitants regarding the material culture of the past. Those that were formed and cultivated outside the scientific and philosophical structures of modernity are defined as "indigenous archeologies" (Hamilakis, 2010).

This ascertainment introduces us to a broader theoretical reflection that has preoccupied many theorists of Memory (as a scientific domain). It concerns the scientific reconstruction of the past by specialized scientists (historical memory) and the reconstruction of the past by the average practical person (social memory). Some distinguish a subjective past identified by non-experts from an objective past identified by archaeologists and historians (Binltiff, 2013: 246). According to other scholars, the past is reconstructed by social subjects (individuals, groups, institutions) specialized or not, and it involves intra-individual and social functions that maintain a conflicting or interactive relationship with each other. In other words, it

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is a co-construction process, the final product of which is far from the original in multiple points (Mantoglou, introduction to Halbwachs, 2013: 18, 21).

Assmann (2017: 45-49, 77-79), however, based on Halbwach's analysis, points out that academic historiography has been de-semioticized and de-symbolized, as it deals with the past when it is dead or extinct from the nowtime, when this has lost its vital importance in preserving the identity of a social group. From this aspect, academic historiography differs from the lived memory, but also from the cultural memory (an Assman's term which he corresponds to the concept of Halbwachs' "tradition"), that is, the cultivated, preserved memory. The last one interprets the past in the sense of the internalized image and has a transformative power that provides directions for the future, as it contributes to the formation of consciousness and identity. Memory has been withdrawn from history, which is in a relationship of waiting and succession with memory.

The same could be said for archeology as well. As a science, it deals with a past far removed from the present, illuminating with scientific coldness only a few pieces of the puzzle. In the present study, therefore, are adopted the distinction of the subjective side of the narratives and the recruitments from the objective side of the data (archaeological and historical) and the substantiated research findings.

Cultural memory is associated and often confused with the collective one. In the present study the two concepts are used according to the theoretical model of Jan Assmann (2017). Collective memory is defined as the collective remembrance of the past in the present, which is considered as a cultural creation, a social construction directly related to the present frame of references (Halbwachs, 2013; Mantoglou, 2010: 24). Assmann defines collective memory as a "culture of remembrance", which is expressed in two distinct and different ways: as "biographical memory" or "communicative memory" covering the depth of three to four generations, or as "cultural memory" which signifies the reconstruction of collective memory, the institutional effort to bridge the chasm with the past.

These two forms of social memory are separated from each other in terms of content, time structure, forms, media and institutional bodies. Cultural memory establishes the relationship of a society with the past by overcoming the changes of social contexts that disrupt it and lead to oblivion. It is based on an organized work of Remembrance that interprets what is no longer possible to be understood and codifies it. It is characterized by the emotional bond, the cultural construction and the conscious relation to the past. The upgrading and reconstruction of social/collective memory into a cultural one is based on "mnemo political strategies" controlled by the respective each time political powers. In these strategies play dominant role the founding myth/history as well as the institutions and the means by which they are implemented (Assmann, 2017: 54-65).

The article at hand is part of a broader study focusing on the role of the local archaeological environment in the formation of the cultural memory of people living in rural areas. It is attempted to outline the views, perceptions and mentalities of a rural community, named Aghios Georgios (Fig. 1), regarding the archaeological site of Koroneia, which has not been highlighted and projected scientifically or institutionally, neither touristically promoted. The site of the ancient city is located in the village's immediate vicinity being part of its territory and its agricultural holding. It is a research question whether these recruitments are influenced and to what extent by academic positions, as well as the role of these recruitments in the formation of cultural memory.

Figure 1: Modern settlements surrounding the ancient Koroneia

1.1 *The historical background of the site*

The ancient city of Koroneia is located on the southern shores of the Lake Kopais that once existed, at the foot of mountain Elikon (Fig. 1). It occupies a low hill, widely known to the locals as Pyrgos. The modern name of the archeological site is due to the remains of a medieval Frankish tower that dominate on the hill (Fig. 2), among other remains of Greco-Roman antiquity. Archaeologically confirmed habitation on the hill is attested from the geometric years until the 14th c. A.D. In the Byzantine period, the region experienced settlements of newcomers: Slavs in the 7th-9th centuries and Albanians during the period when the city is abandoned. During the turbulent, for the history of Boeotia, years from the 13th to the 15th century, various conquerors passed through the area: Franks in the 13th century, Catalans in the 14th century, Ottomans from the first half of the 15th century and afterwards (Bintliff, 2011, 2005: p. 12, Kalaitzakis, 2002: 131-134, the same, 2011).

Figure 2:The medieval tower on the hill of ancient Koroneia

In the present days, the archeological site has not been promoted culturally or as a tourist destination, on the contrary, it presents an image of abandonment. The ancient area is covered with olive trees, properties of the inhabitants of Aghios Georgios village, which is located about 2 kilometers southwest. This is the closest modern settlement to the ancient site (Fig. 1) and

is the heading and largest village (kefalochori) of the area, of approximately 1700 inhabitants according to the 2011 census. In the consciousness of its inhabitants the Aghios Georgios village is differentiated from the other neighboring villages that surround the hill of ancient Koroneia, which are thought up of arvanitic origin (arvanitochoria: Agoriani/Aghia Paraskevi, Koutoumoulas/(new) Koroneia and Steveniko/Aghia Triada (Fig. 1). Of these, mainly the residents of Steveniko proudly identify today themselves as Arvanites.

As early as the 15th century, all the aforementioned settlements are recorded in Ottoman tax archives of 1466, most of them as Greek villages. However, only Aghios Georgios is considered to be of Byzantine origin, while Agoriani/Aghia Paraskevi and Steveniko/Aghia Triada it is claimed to be Slavic settlements of the 9th century fully hellenized in the 15th century (Kalaitzakis, 2002: 134-136, 155). The only Arvanitic settlement recorded in the Ottoman archives is Koutoumoulas. This village was renamed in 1915 to Koroneia (Government Gazette, 180A-11/5/1915), after the name of the ancient city, and the last decades its old name tends to be forgotten. The name of the ancient city was also revived in modern years in the honorary naming of the Municipality of Koroneia (1836-1840 and 1999-2010), whose municipal seat was in Aghios Georgios.

In this work, will be presented quantitative research, the data of which will be attempted in some topics, in order to stand out better, to be combined with qualitative ones. The research, quantitative and qualitative, was conducted on residents of Aghios Georgios in 2019-2020.
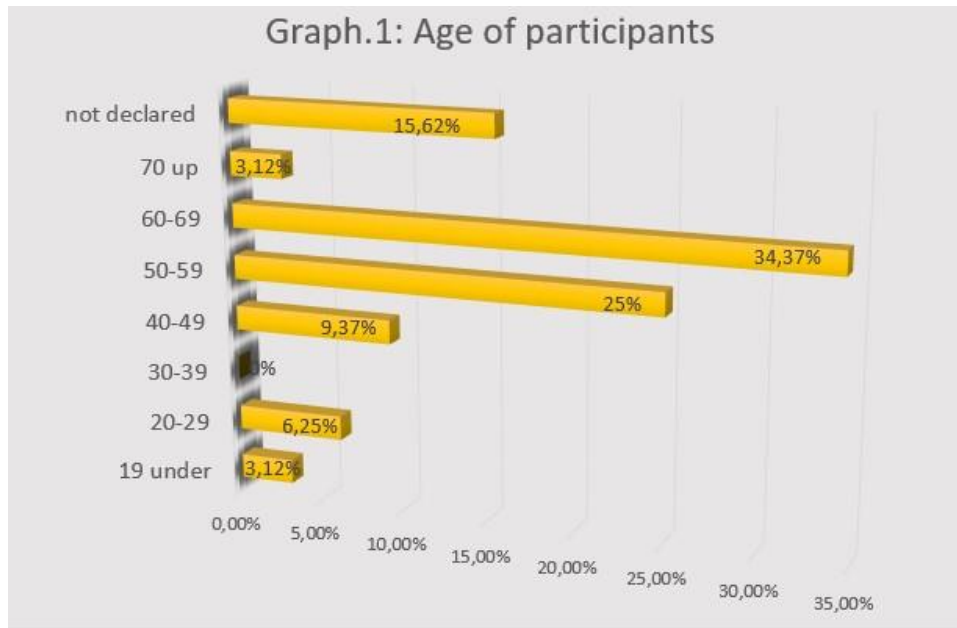
The questionnaire was completed mainly by residents of Aghios Georgios, in December 2019 during a lecture given by the writer of the present article about the ancient history of the area. The lecture was organized by a local cultural association named "Itonia", which was founded by residents of Aghios Georgios who were interested in getting involved, among other cultural activities, with the history of their area and in promoting it.

2. Data analysis

The participants in the questionnaire were 32 people. Few (18.75%) were visitors from neighboring settlements (Levadia and Steveniko / Aghia Triada). Most of the residents of Aghios Georgios (68.75%) stated that they come from or live in the village, but some (12.5%) neglected or were unwilling to state their place of residence/origin.

The age range of the participants ranged from 19 to 86 years old, but the majority of them was between 50 to 70 years old (Graph 1). This element indicates the indifference of the young population to the issue of the lecture, without being excluded other reasons for its absence.

The questions of the quantitative research are grouped as follows: (A) views about the origin and foundation of the settlement, (B) knowledge and views about ancient Koroneia, (C) unconscious survivals of traditions, (D) views on the monument at the entrance of the village.

Graph.1: Age of participants

Age group	Percentage
not declared	15,62%
70 up	3,12%
60-69	34,37%
50-59	25%
40-49	9,37%
30-39	%
20-29	6,25%
19 under	3,12%

2.1 *Views about the origin and establishment of the village*

Figure 3. preserved "makrynari" in Agios Georgios. Property A. Aisopos

The settlement of Aghios Georgios is witnessed not only in the Ottoman tax records from the 15th to the 17th centuries, but also by the European travelers who visited the area and ancient Koroneia from the 17th to the 19th centuries (van Zwienen 2007, 11-12). Bintliff (2011) argues that the present village is a continuation of medieval Koroneia, abandoned at the end of the 14th century. The main evidence for this hypothesis is the presence of an architectural type of medieval farmhouse called "makrynari", some whole samples of which (Fig. 3) are still preserved in Aghios Georgios (Bintliff et al., 2013: 30).

As the survey shows, however, the locals have a different opinion about the origin of their village (Graph 2). The academic theory that the village exists since the 15th century, as a continuation of the medieval settlement of ancient Koroneia, was known to a very small percentage of respondents (6.25%), as a result of Professor Bintliff's speech in the village in 2012.

The dominant opinion of the residents (60%) was that their village is newer, from the 17th-18th century and in fact a small percentage (6.25%) stated a specific date of foundation, in

1756. As revealed by the qualitative research, the foundation of the village is attributed to shepherds from Epirus or Evrytania and Agrafa who descended lower. The opinion that the foundation of the village dates back to 1750 is found also in a teacher's notes from 1973 (archival material of the Community) and in a recent folklore textbook (Mitsou-Papalambrou, 2009: 11).

Graph.2: Views on the foundation period of the village
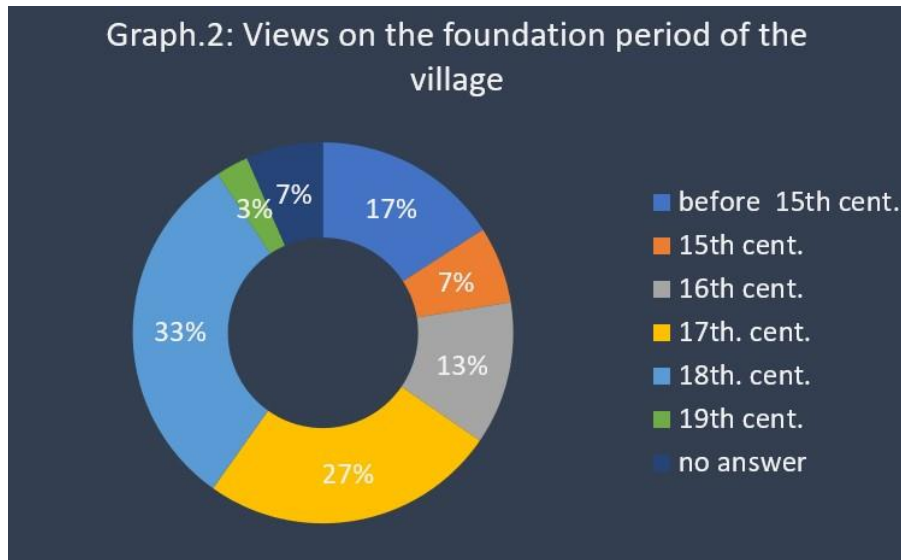
According to the teacher, the village was founded by great shepherds (tseligkades) from Parnassos and its population increased in 1783 with residents of Levadia who moved due to a plague epidemic, while the relevant Wikipedia entry attributes its founding only to the latter. According to the folklorist writer, the original birthplace of the village was the Liesta location (hill of Aghios Konstantinos) to the southwest of the current settlement, a point of view that many residents of Aghios Georgios (Aghiorghites), of various age groups, share, reproducing family stories that are passed down from generation to generation. In Liesta, habitation is confirmed in recent times, but, as the Ottoman tax records reveal, these are small and evanescent settlements with different names, appearing and disappearing at time to time from the 16th-19th centuries. These settlements are merging gradually in the neighboring settlement of Aghios Georgios, as testify also some elderly habitants of the village (van Zwienen, 2007: 21).

Graph.3: self-assessment of resident knowledge about the history of the village

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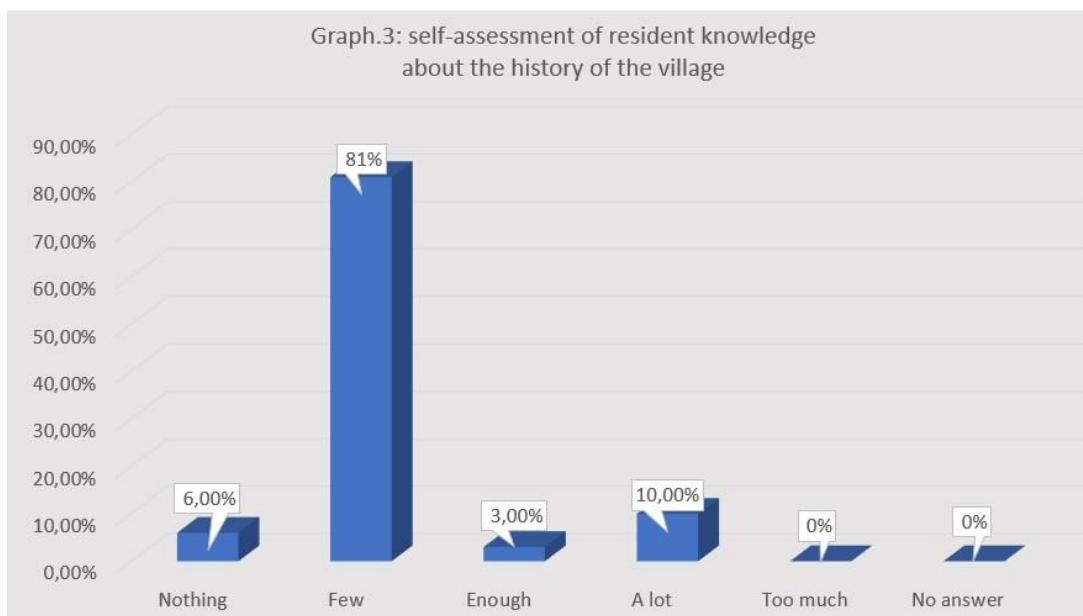
The academic, however, history of the village is not known to the residents (Graph 3). A small percentage of respondents (6%) declared complete ignorance of the history of Aghios Georgios. The majority of residents (81%), regardless of age, admitted that they know little, without specifying what this knowledge is concern, except for a few who stated the location Pyrgos (12%) or the Liesta site (12%). Very few, aged 57-62, said they know quite a bit (3%) or a lot (10%).

2.2 *Views about ancient Koroneia*

One parameter of the questionnaire was to investigate if the residents know the location of the ancient city, what their knowledge and their attitude is about it.

Most of the respondents (78%) beliefs that they know the location of Pyrgos and declared that they had visited it (75%) (Graph 5a-b). But it was found (Graph 4) that it was lower the percentage (62.5%) of those with good knowledge of the area, who could recognize the built with ancient material modern fountain, that is located there and which anyone, who visits the area, will definitely encounter. Some respondents (12.5%, of which 9.37% live in Aghios Georgios), confused the place with other sites of fountains, either inside the village (Alonaki) or nearby it (Kamari, Aghios Konstantinos). If all these are added to those who did not answer, is significant the percentage (37.5%) of those who did not identify the position with certainty.
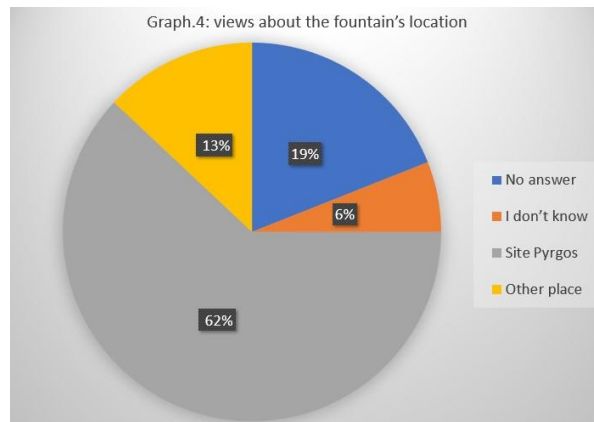

On the contrary, few residents (rate 12.5%, Graph 5a-b) described the location topographically, indicating the well-known hill, and half of them (6.25%) answered that they had noticed there "a wall" or "pieces of bricks" (3.12%), meaning with that the ancient pottery sherds. This shows that most residents did not know and/or had not noticed the surface archaeological remains that exist on Pyrgos hill.
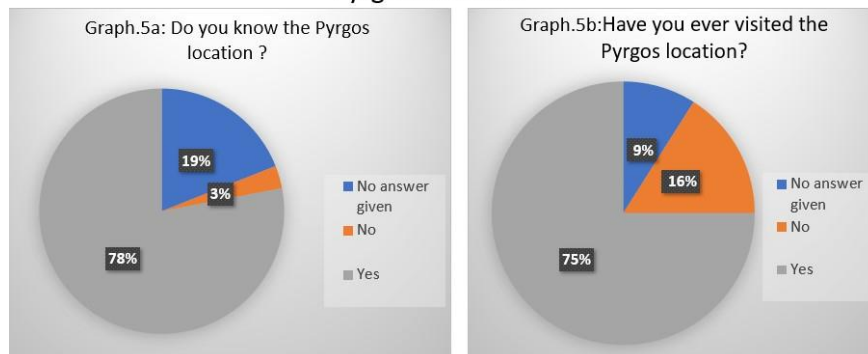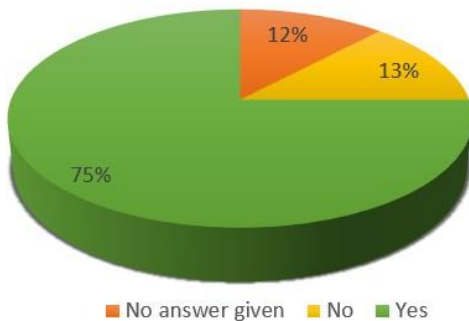
According to a large percentage of the respondents (81%, Graph 5c) the specific hill is a place of ancient habitation. They reported that there was a city (53.12%), or a citadel (28.12%), or something else (9.37%), such as a palace (6.25%), or a friktoria – a place from which someone could watch the movements of the enemies and give signal to his companions with smoke or fire-(3.12%). Very few (9.37%) did not give an answer and none stated "I have no idea."

Graph.5c: What did exist on the hill of the Pyrgos location?
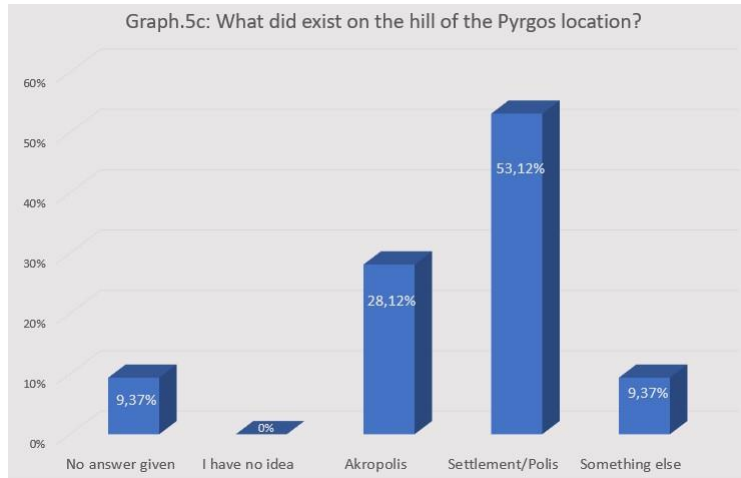
Regardless of whether they knew where Pyrgos hill was and whether they had visited it, the respondents knew that it was an archaeological residential site, but this did not mean that they necessarily identified it with ancient Koroneia.

Graph.6a: What have you heard/know about the ancient Koroneia?
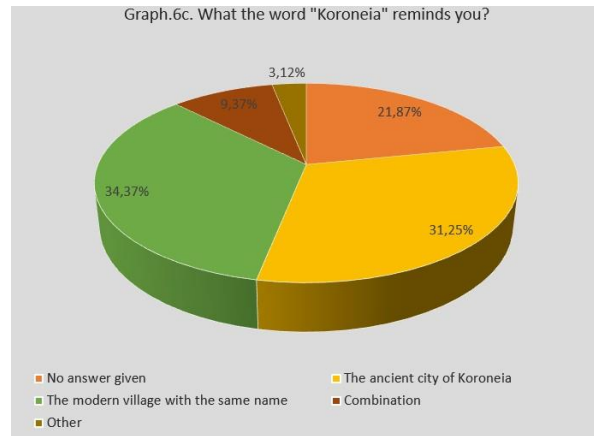
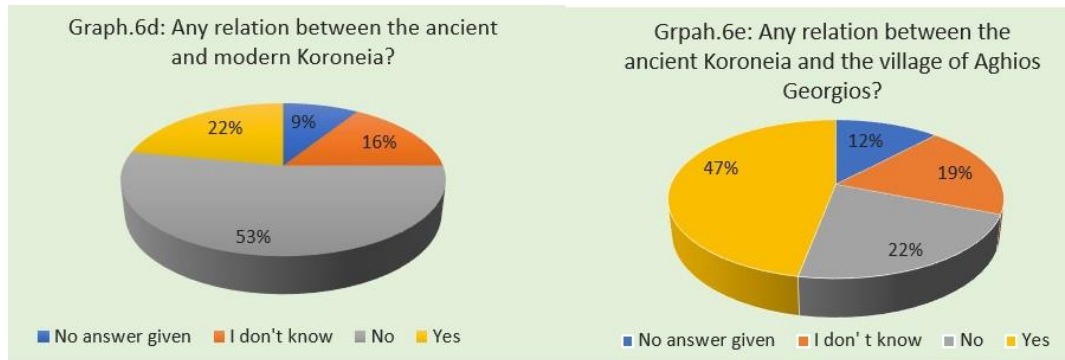Graph.6b: Do you know where the ancient Koroneia was located?
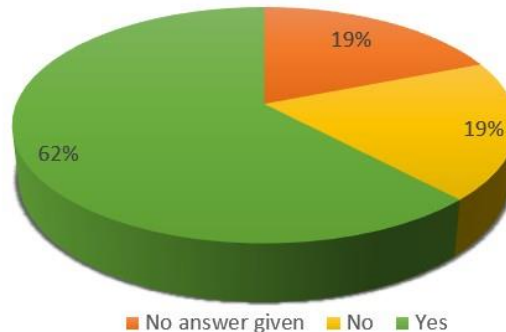
A large percentage of respondents (78%) stated that they knew of the existence of ancient Koroneia and had heard something about its history (Graph 6a-b). Few of them mentioned something more specific, such as an ancient city (3.12%), the battle of Koroneia (6.25%) or Pausanias as a source of knowledge (3.12%). Many (62%) also referred that they knew the location of the ancient city (Graph 6a-b). However, if we combine the negative answers with those who did not answer questions 6.a and 6.b, we have a significant percentage that seems to ignore both: the existence and history of the ancient city (25%), as well as its location (38%). In fact, very few (9.37%) identified ancient Koroneia with Pyrgos hill and only a percentage of 3.12% mentioned it explicitly. Therefore, it seems that they know that ancient Koroneia is somewhere in the surrounding area, but its exact location is not known for most of them.

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Graph.6c. What the word "Koroneia" reminds you?

- No answer given
- The ancient city of Koroneia
- The modern village with the same name
- Combination
- Other

To the question "*what does the word "Koroneia" remind me of?*" (Graph 6c) approximately 1/3 of the respondents (34.37%) gave the answer that reminds them the modern homonym village (Koutoumoulas/Koroneia), the other 1/3 (31.25%) the ancient city – which also mentioned as "Koroni" (3.12%) – and very few (9.37%) answered both. Quite a few, however, were those who did not specify what it reminded them of (24.99%, if we add those who did not answer (21.87%) and those who stated "other" (3.12%) without mentioning what).

Therefore, the name of the ancient city does not seem to have a dominant position in the collective memory. It is primarily associated, in the perception of a significant percentage of the inhabitants, with the modern settlement of the same name. The impression that Koutoumoulas/Koroneia is the continuation of the ancient city is spread by folklore writings (Mitsou-Papalamprou, 2009: 125) and reinforced by the internet (Wikipedia, entry Koroneia), possibly influencing the opinions of the local residents. This trend is undoubtedly linked to the practice of naming non-Greek settlements with ancient Greek names.

Graph.6d: Any relation between the ancient and modern Koroneia?

- No answer given
- I don't know
- No
- Yes

Grpah.6e: Any relation between the ancient Koroneia and the village of Aghios Georgios?

- No answer given
- I don't know
- No
- Yes

Regarding any connection between the ancient settlement and the modern homonymous village and that of Aghios Georgios (Graph 6d-e), a significant percentage declared ignorance (25% for the Koutoumoulas/Koroneia, 31% for the Aghios Georgios, adding those who didn't answer and the answers of "I don't know"). However, the dominant perception that emerged (53%) is that the ancient city has nothing to do with the modern settlement of the same name (because ancient city is situated lower, as noted by 3.12%). For many (47%) ancient Koroneia is related to Aghios Georgios, but most of them (34.37%) did not clarify this relationship, except for a few who answered that it is closer and belongs to the village territory (3.12%), or mentioned Bintliff's theory (3.12%) that the Aghios Georgios village is the continuation of medieval Koroneia settlement. But there is a remarkable percentage (22%) which believe that there is some connection of the ancient city with Koutoumoulas/Koroneia, although they did not specify it (18.75%), except for a few who mentioned that it is only nominal (3.12%) or due to geographical proximity (3.12%).

In summary, from the quantitative research it is found out that, contrary to historical data, Koroneia/Koutomoulas village is the modern settlement that is projected as a continuation of ancient Koroneia, a view that is not, however, universally accepted by the inhabitants of the area. On the other hand, the dominant belief of the residents of Aghios Georgios is that the origin of their village is not historically connected with ancient Koroneia. This conclusion is also confirmed by qualitative research. The current president of the Koroneia/Koutoumoulas settlement proudly claims that his village is the continuation of the homonymous ancient city (testimony Fountas, X. / Φουντάς, Χ., ex-president of the village), while a hitherto president of Aghios Georgios states with certainty that his village has no connection with the ancient city (testimony Christos Karatzalis / Χρήστος Καράτζαλης).

 So, the academic positions are unknown to the majority of the residents. Their views have been shaped mainly by oral family histories and the opinions of respected members of the community, while the influence of the internet does not seem as strong. As a result, local perceptions which have been consolidated they on the one hand are at variance with the official history/archaeology and on the other hand differ from each other.

However, although residents admit, according to the quantitative data, that their knowledge of their local history is minimal and, as the qualitative research reveals, vague and confused, they are not indifferent to it. Indication of their interest are the certainty expressed by the majority of respondents regarding the knowledge of the archaeological area, even if this does not correspond exactly to reality.

As the quantitative research reveals, for the majority of the inhabitants it is known that there was an ancient settlement on the archaeological hill. But it is found that although many have visited the archaeological site, few have noticed or are aware of the visible archaeological remains that exist there. Also, few identify the place with ancient Koroneia. Although they know that ancient Koroneia was in the surrounding area, its exact location for many remains unclear and its history almost completely unknown. No one mentioned the cult of Itonia Athena, the Boeotian Koinon, which had its headquarters in her sanctuary, and the Pamvoiotia festival, for which the area was known in antiquity (Strabo, 9.11.29, Pausanias, 9.34.1-5). Even the name of the ancient city does not seem to have a dominant position in the collective memory of the residents and for a significant percentage of the respondents (about 1/3) it is associated only with the modern settlement of the same name.

Combining the quantitative data with those of the qualitative research, it is found that in the age group from 60 years and above we could recognize manifestations of a folk "indigenous archaeology." The names given to the spots of the archaeological site, as Scoutela, Bricks, Loutros, Pyrgos, are due to the visible remains found there by the cultivators, which have been interpreted under a functional perspective.

In one case (Aghioi Theodoroi), the visible Roman remains are perceived in a Christian context and in the perception of some residents they are placed under the protection of the saints and the Virgin Mary who ask for the offer of the residents in return of the help that they offer to them. About the middle of the 20th century, a resident of Aghios Georgios village, when, after a night's storm, went the morning anxious to see his mare, which he had tied up injured and pregnant in a field, he finds her to have given birth and be healthy. Then a woman dressed in a black-clad presented to him and told him that she helped his animal, but in return she asked from him to protect her house, which is supported by four pillars and is located where she steps. At that point the villager found an icon of Saint Theodoroi and a pillar. He built a small eikonostasi there (it still remains empty and abandoned), in which he placed the icon of the saints (testimony Konstantina Goula / Κωνσταντίνα Γούλα).

The people of this generation, due to the direct and frequent contact they had as cultivators with the archaeological site, were connected to it, they felt it familiar, like an extension

of their home. They interpreted the antiquities they found in their own way in a context without historical distinctions. The objects which were hidden in this land and usually they perceived them as part of their property, not only excited surprise and admiration, but also, they used to become objects of respect, or even reverence, and sometimes their vague and unclear antiquity perhaps was perceived as something which give sacredness to the place. However, these representations are not reproduced by the next generation, which knows the existence of the archaeological site, but moves away emotionally, maintaining a blurred and unclear image of it. The younger generation, due to changes in living conditions and the socio-economic context, has lost contact with the archaeological site, even ignoring its existence. Indicative of this is the statement of a student of 3rd Grade of Highschool (2020) "I have the feeling that I live in a place that has no history".

Nevertheless, regardless of the age group, the residents of Aghios Georgios do not recognize material remains (such as "macrynaria") or traditions that connect them culturally with the antiquity. Not even toponyms that refer to the ancient past of the region are preserved. Probably, in the post-Byzantine years, when the preserved visible material remains were extensively used as building material covering practical needs, the ancient toponyms of the area were also condemned to oblivion. The Levithrio and Lafystio mountains that surround the archaeological site are today called Ismail and Granitsa. The Falaros and Kouarios rivers are known respectively as Potza and Karkari / Karkari stream. The new names refer to the inhabitants of different ethnicities (Franks, Catalans, Arvanites, Ottomans) who settled the area from post-Byzantine times onwards, for whom the ancient Greek, or even the Roman-Byzantine, past was something foreign, if not hostile.

2.3 *Unconscious survivals of tradition*

In Aghios Georgios, are detected some evidence, that would deserve further investigation, which indicate the old past and history of the Aghios Georgios village and differentiate it from the surrounding settlements. These are the local dialect (with several words of ancient Greek and Byzantine origin), the women's traditional clothing (the way of weaving and designs from the siguni (σιγκούνι)) and some customs that are preserved rather as unconscious survivals (Goula, 2023).


Figure 5. The ikonostasi of St. Georgios (as has been rebuilt the last decades)

One such custom was the offering of cotton to the saints of the settlement. This thanksgiving offering refers to the ancient custom of beginnings (απαρχαί), the offering of the first fruits, which had been imposed by the priesthood. This custom is characteristic of the ancient Greek rural world (Burkert, 1993: 156-159) that was preserved during Christianity (Varvounis, 2018). This used to be done in the additional small side hatch that had a small *ikonostasi* (εικονοστάσι) (that is a small builded structure in the countryside, beside the roads, which inside is hosting the icon of a saint) of Saint George. It is located just before the entrance to the village and directly opposite of the archaeological hill of Koroneia (Fig. 5). The initiative of some residents, at the beginning of the 2010s, to restore it and highlight it, apart from an expression of their respect and faith (testimony of I. Mavroides/Ι. Μαυροειδής) is mainly indicative of their intention to preserve and promote their special local customs.
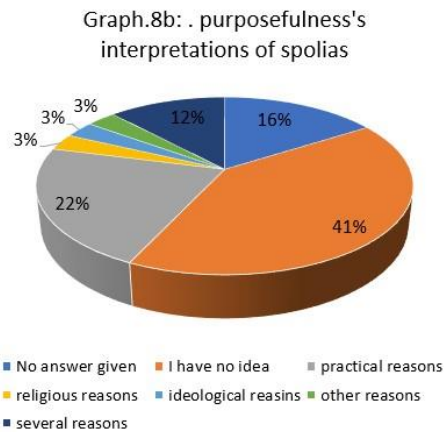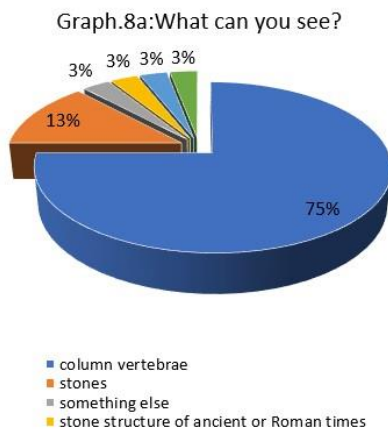
As come out from the quantitative research (Graph 7), the unusual specificity of this particular monument was

known to one portion of the respondents (28.12%), which did not associate it with any ancient origin. For most of them (65.62%) it was an ordinary *iconostasi*. Ancient worked stones had also been built into the original building, an element pointed out by some respondents (18.75%). It is noted, therefore, in the modern era not only a gradual weakening of traditions, but also a forgetting of them, due to a change in the economic-social framework imposed by modernization and globalization.

Graph.7: Have been noticed/is it known any peculiarity on this eikonostasi?
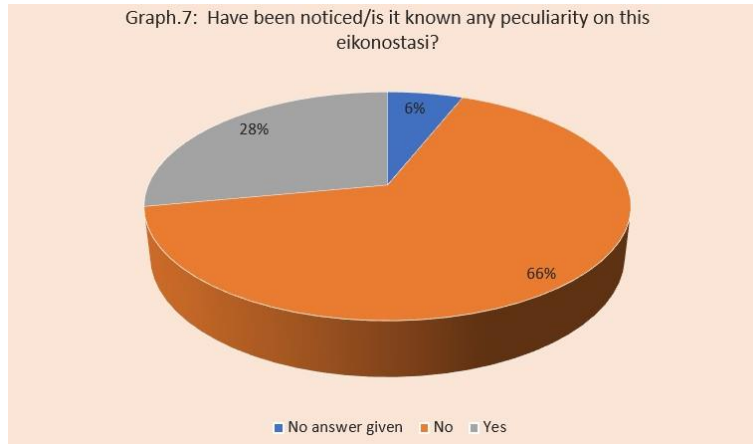
The practice of walling-in mounting ancient spolia (inscriptions, columns, worked stones) is also found in some churches of the village. One of them is of the patron Saint George. The church was built in the first decades of the 20th century upon a pre-existing one, of unknown date, which has not been saved. In the foundation of the church are visible built-in kiona's vertebrae which were evidently also present in the older building. Most respondents (75% Graph 8a) recognized what it is. Some, however, saw stones (9.37%), blocks of walls (douvaria) (3.12%), old foundations (3.12%), stonework of ancient or Roman construction (3.12%), or "something else" (3.12%) who did not know how to declare it. Regarding their feasibility (Graph 8b), more than half of respondents (57%) said they have no idea what it might be. The explanations given varied: for practical reasons (21.87%), for stability reasons (9.37%), because it was a ready-made building material (6.25%), in order to connect practicality with tradition (3.12%), in order to be stabled the saint's icon (3.12%), in order they be saved (3.12%), or to bury them (3.12%), due to illiteracy (6.25%), because of ignorance of their worth (3, 12%), because of Christianity anti-Hellenism (3.12%).

Walling in of ancient spolia in the church of Saint Georgios

Graph.8a:What can you see?

- column vertebrae
- stones
- something else
- stone structure of ancient or Roman times

Graph.8b: . purposefulness's interpretations of spolias

- No answer given
- I have no idea
- practical reasons
- religious reasons
- ideological reasins
- other reasons
- several reasons

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Regarding the origin of the ancient building material (graph 8c), 1/3 of the respondents seem to be unaware of it, the other 1/3 stated that they generally and vaguely come from ancient monuments (buildings, temples), while some identified the ancient Koroneia (15.62%) and the site Pyrgos (15.62%), but without identifying them with each other.

Walling in of ancient spolia in the church of Saint Georgios

Graph.8c: guessworks of their origin
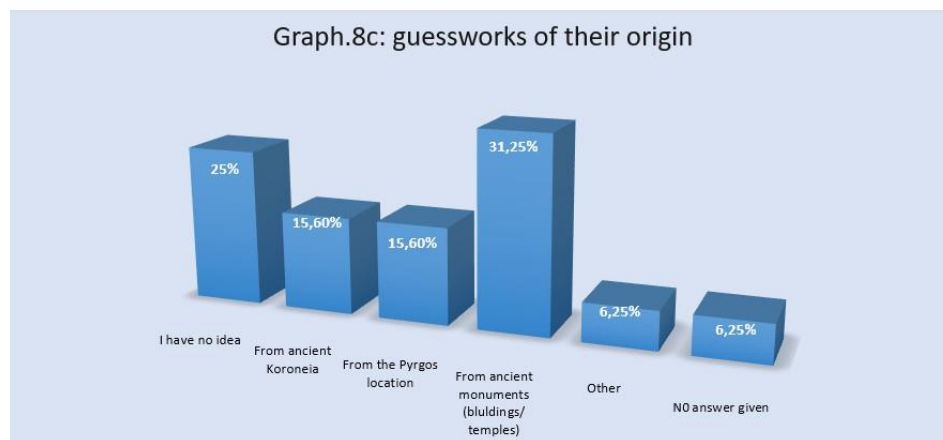
The archaeological site of Koroneia in the post-Byzantine years was a source of supplying ready-made building material for houses and churches of the surrounding settlements in the area (Papachatzis, 1992: 216). On an ideological level, the transfer of ancient stones is considered to symbolize the connection with the past and its appropriation (Meyer, 2013). It is established that the practice of incorporating ancient remains into churches goes back to the Byzantine era, and in particular to the 9th-10th century. It is a practice of the intellectual elite, and mainly of the ecclesiastical circle, with the aim on the one hand to put the pagan past under the control and authority of the Church, on the other hand to expose what was considered important and worthy of attention by teaching and connecting the uneducated peasants of Byzantium with their past, at the same time promoting the cultural value of the ancient Greek culture. (Papalexandrou, 2010: 64-65).

Using Assmann's terminology, we could characterize this practice as a mnemo-political strategy of connection with the ancient Greek cultural heritage. In the case of Boeotia, it probably also aimed at the cultural assimilation of the Slavic settlements in the region. In the wider region, the practice is ascertained since the 9th century in PanAghia Skripou of Orchomenos (Papalexandrou 2010: 66-68). In the territory of Koroneia it is observed in the Monastery of Aghia Paraskevi of the 11th century. where inscriptions from the sanctuary of Charops Herakles have been walled in (Papachatzis 1992: 219-220). Charopeio belongs in the territory of Aghios Georgios and it is argued (Goula 2021) that it was connecting with the ancient mystical cult of Itonia Athena. Epigraphic material from this sanctuary has been embedded in the post-Byzantine church of Aghios Taxiarchis, which replaced the ancient temple in this site, and in the church of Aghios Ioannis the Baptist in the settlement of Aghios Georgios (Papachatzis, *op. cit.*), perhaps indicating the appropriation of the attributes of the pagan deity (Goula, 2023).

Many residents today are unaware of the existence of these elements. But even if they were aware of them, the ideological purpose of this practice, that means the teaching and the connection with the ancient cultural heritage, is no longer recognizable, as the quantitative research showed. In our time the ideological framework for reporting and dealing with archaeological remains has changed as the next example attests.

2.4 *Views about the monument at the entrance of the village*

It has been pointed out (Bintliff, 2013, Forbes, 2013) that rural residents, feeling cut off from official history, try to link their place and its little-documented history to a famous past. According to Bintliff (2013) local communities try in various means and ways to certify that their community has appeared on the scene of history as a place of significance. This is a direct reaction to the neglect of their local history by official bodies. Their attitude is owned also to the absence of local traditions that convey reliable information about the remote past of the community. Thus, by highlighting (locating, selecting and displaying) outdoors ancient remains, which they associate with myths of origin that make them feel proud, they create alternative – to the official version- stories, and construct their present-day presence in a context of memory of greater importance than their own common frame of memory which they are able to project.

Bintliff (2013: 240) interprets, also, in this context the modern monument at the entrance of Aghios Georgios (Fig. 6).


© E.G.Goula (personal archive)

Figure 6. The modern monument in the entrance
of Aghios Georgios village

This monument, which is not accompanied by any explanatory sign, was erected in the 2000s by the initiative of the Municipality of Koroneia of that time. The purpose was to emphasize and decorate the entrance of the village, a practice that was common at that time, but also to connect Aghios Georgios settlement, which was the seat of the Koroneia Municipality at that time, with the local archaeological environment (interview Mitsou, Nt. / Μήτσου, Ντ.), functioning in some way as a symbol of the municipality (interview X. Karatzalis / Χ.Καράτζαλης). An attempt was made to create a replica of the medieval Frankish tower that survives on the hill of ancient Koroneia. The interesting thing is that in the perception of the initiators of the modern monument, as well as of a portion of the inhabitants, the ancient monument, which they call "Tower," is perceived as part of the city wall and not as part of a building's masonry.

Modern Monument in the entrance of Aghios Georgios village

Graph. 9a: Views on the type of the monument

■ No answer given ■ Nothing ■ Wall of a town ■ wall of a bulding ■ something else
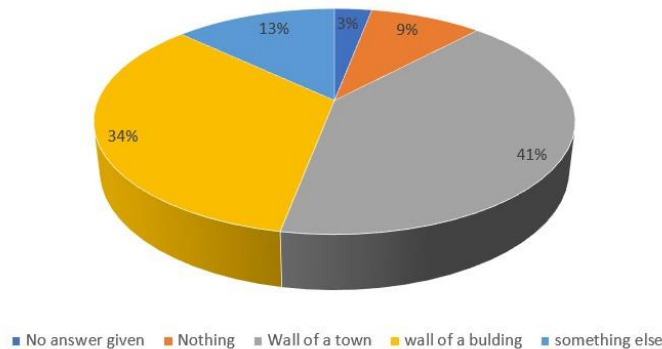
Several of the respondents of the quantitative survey (approx. 25% - Graph 9A), had no idea what the modern monument at the entrance of the village might represent. At the same time, a significant percentage of residents seemed confused as to whether it is a wall of an unknown city (40.62%) or a wall of a building (34.37%), which few (9.37%) associated with the monument on the homonymous location and very few (3.19%) associated it with ancient Koroneia. Regarding the symbolism of the modern monument (Graph 9B), a significant percentage (37.5%) considered it to be a symbol of the ancient history of the area. They associated it either with ancient Koroneia (6.25%), or the tower of the ancient city (9.37%) or the tower at the homonymous site (21.87%), or with a vague and unknown tower (6.25 %), which some (3.12%) described as "Catalan", or considered it be the symbol of some indefinite wall (12.5%). However, its symbolism and meaning seem to be unknown for a corresponding percentage (37.5% combining the unanswered fields with "don't know"). For some (9.37%) it represented nothing, while some depreciated and discredited it, noting that it is a "bad imitation" (because the battlements of the wall are turned inwards, intending the modern settlement), or that "*it is crappie.*"

Modern Monument in the entrance of Aghios Georgios village
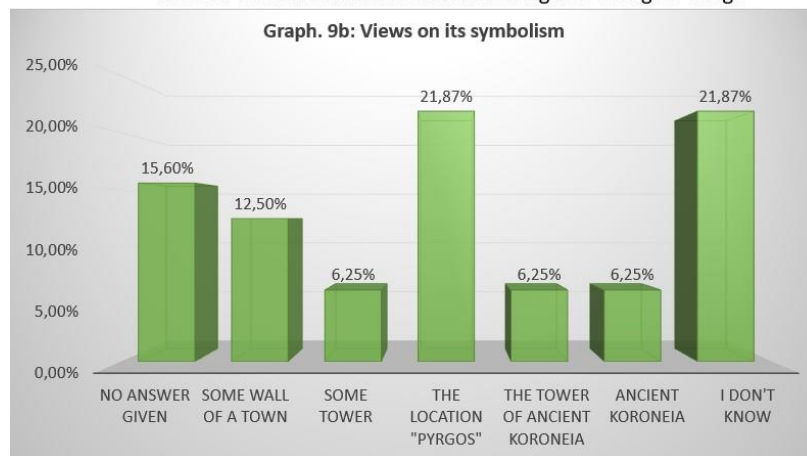
The ancient monument of the Frankish tower is not in the local collective memory a symbol of oppression and subjugation, as it historically was, because its history is ignored and its architectural type is misunderstood. In the common perception of most residents, it is confused with the city-wall of one town and it is perceived as a symbol of the ancient history of the area. For this reason, a part of the population – which its age is determined over 60 years old, consisting of those who still maintain direct contact with the archaeological site and/or have an academic

education – wishes to appropriate it and project it. However, this symbolism, which the initiators of the modern monument wanted to give it, is not accepted by all the inhabitants. Many ignore its connection with the archaeological site and consider its symbolism unclear, while a part of the population discredits or under evaluates the symbolic importance of the monument. It does not, therefore, touch the sentiment, nor excite the pride of the inhabitants.

3. Conclusions

In the example under consideration, as can be seen from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitive research, the academic positions do not influence the recruitments and interpretations of the residents regarding the archaeological environment of their area. The positions of official archeology-history are almost completely unknown to the local population. The non-diffusion of scientific knowledge in the local community has as result the ignorance or not valid knowledge of historical and archaeological data and by extension implies the reception of the visible remains in an ahistorical context. Also, the value of the local archaeological environment, which has a limited to non-existent role in the construction of the meaning makings of the ancient past, is not highlighted by the institutional bodies. Bintliff (2013), points out as a characteristic phenomenon of the Greek countryside, the displacement of local stories from the official narrative and attributes it on the one hand to the policy of highlighting famous and well-known places, such as Athens, and on local level Thebes, and on the other hand to the lack of connection of the local history with education.

The local population's perceptions of the history of their place are determined by variable factors, which act differently on a case-by-case basis, such as direct contact with the archaeological site, family histories, or the opinions of some respected members of the community. The local population in its majority is not indifferent to its local history and cultural heritage. However, as its meaning-makings are formed spontaneously, without the intervention of institutional bodies, it is to be expected that they will be differ or even contradict with the academic and institutional perspective. The image of the local population about the archaeological past of their area is blurred, confused and differs not only between the settlements, but also between generations of the same settlement, where a remarkable difference of perceptions is found.

The collective memory of the residents is expressed with inhomogeneity, it is improvised and spontaneous, without time depth, without coherence and is composed of daily, oral stories of the actor-subjects themselves. It exhibits all the characteristics of social memory that Assmann defines as "communicative" or "biographical" memory. This type of memory is separated from cultural memory, that means the conscious relation to the past, the internalized image of the past that becomes a guiding force for the future and provides cultural standards, allowing the formation of cultural consciousness and identity (Assmann, 2017: 52-53).

The relationship of the inhabitants with their archaeological environment indicates that this distant past has not been internalized by the population as a whole. Although the ancient remains cause respect for many, and the most sensitized, due to educational background, seek their appropriation and showing, these efforts, as we have seen, do not express the population as a whole, do not touch them emotionally, nor they stimulate their pride. On the contrary, the attempts to invent the past and reinterpret the archaeological monuments are characterized by a lack of coherence, are not universally accepted and are powerless to influence the conscience of the inhabitants.

Collective memory is made up of types of memory, in relation to time, and of places of memory, in relation to space (Halbwachs, 2013; Assmann, 2017: 38-40). However, it is established on the one hand that the archaeological sites and monuments of ancient Koroneia do not constitute a universally recognizable place of memory for the inhabitants of the modern

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communities, on the other hand that common types of memory are absent. The inhabitants do not share a common tradition for the origin of their settlement and the local archaeological environment.

According to Assmann, key factors for the reconstruction of biographical memory into cultural memory are the existence of a chasma with the past and the preservation of visible remnants that allow the connection with it, elements that are found in the example under consideration. Toponyms are a characteristic element which evince the chasma that separates the communities of the present from the ancient past of the region. Also, it is observed that the local archaeological past, although cloudy, is present in the consciousness of the majority of the inhabitants, therefore cultivable for the formation of cultural memory. But there is an absence of a dominant discourse (founding history in Assmann's terminology) that would make possible the codification of this past in places and types of memory and the conscious emotional connection of the local population to it, its internalization so that they feel it as part of their identity.

The above findings are indicative of the non-existence of mnemo-politic strategies aimed at actively connecting the local population with their local archaeological heritage. In this light, a different targeting of educational policies alone is not enough. The education should also be harmonized with the policy and targeting of other bodies managing culture and cultural heritage, such as the Principles of Local Government and above all the Ministry of Culture and the local archaeological services.

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List of Figures

1. Modern settlements surrounding the ancient Koroneia. © E. G. Goula (personal archive)

2. The medieval tower on the hill of ancient Koroneia. © Kastrologos (kastra.eu)

3. Preserved "makrynari" in Aghios Georgios. Property A. Aisopos. © E. G. Goula (personal archive)

4. The fountain on Pyrgos hill (in the background the medieval tower). © E. G. Goula (personal archive)

5. Iconostasi of St. Georgios. © E. G. Goula (personal archive)

6. The monument at the entrance of Aghios Georgios settlement. © E. G. Goula (personal archive)

List of Graphs

Graph 1: Age of participants. (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 2: Views on the foundation period of the village. (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 3: Self-assessment of resident knowledge about the history of the village. (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 4: Views about the faucet's location. (© E. G. Goula)

Pyrgos Location, graph 5:

Graph 5.a: Do you know the Pyrgos location? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 5b.: Have you ever visited the Pyrgos location? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 5c: What did exist on the hill of the Pyrgos location? (© E. G. Goula)

Ancient Koroneia, graph 6:

Graph 6a: What have you heard/know about the ancient Koroneia? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 6b: Do you know where the ancient Koroneia was located? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 6c. What the word "Koroneia" reminds you? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 6d: Any relation between the ancient and modern Koroneia? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 6e: Any relation between the ancient Koroneia and the village of Aghios Georgios? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 7: Iconostasi of St. Georgios: Have been noticed/is it known any peculiarity on this iconostasi? (© E. G. Goula)

Walling-in of ancient spolia in the church of Saint Georgios, graph. 8:

Graph 8a. What can you see? (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 8b. purposefulness interpretations of spolia. (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 8c. guesswork of their origin. (© E. G. Goula)

Modern Monument in the entrance of Aghios Georgios village, graph. 9:

Graph 9a. Views on the type of monument. (© E. G. Goula)

Graph 9b. Views on its symbolism. (© E. G. Goula)