

Emplekton Technique in Fortification at Ithome/Messene, Megalopolis, and Mantinea:

*the work of Theban military engineers?**

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Recent studies of the use of emplekton masonry in classical Greek fortifications have attributed the development and spread of the technique in mainland Greece to Theban engineers. A major part of this argument is the assertion that the fortifications of Mantinea (when re-built) in eastern Arkadia, Megalopolis in southwestern Arkadia, and Ithome/Messene in Messenia were due to Theban initiative. The new town created in Messenia in 370/69 BC was originally called Ithome, but later became known as Messene.¹ For convenience it will be referred to in this paper as Messene. Certainly all three were founded – or in Mantinea’s case re-founded – not long after the battle of Leuktra, and at all three the emplekton technique (as defined by Karlsson; see below) was used, but the argument that the fortifications of all three were due to Theban initiative runs counter to the conclusions of historians who have sought to reconstruct political developments in the Peloponnese in that period. Nancy Demand in particular has examined the question, devoting to it a chapter entitled “The Peloponnese in the fourth century: an Epaminondean plan?”. She came to the conclusion that “the evidence does not support the hypothesis that Epaminondas himself formulated a master plan involving these three urban foundations before the

first Theban expedition”, but her arguments seem to have escaped the attention of some scholars writing after her. She also suggested that “a plan does seem to have evolved as the situation developed”,² i.e. in the period following the first Theban expedition in the Peloponnese. It is the purpose of this article to argue that the fortifications of Mantinea owed nothing to Epaminondas, as Demand and others have argued, and that the fortifications of Megalopolis may well also not be due to Epaminondas or Theban engineers.³

The principal recent treatment of emplekton masonry is by Karlsson (1992), following a pioneering article by Tomlinson (1961). In the emplekton style, Karlsson argues, headers are used as well as stretchers, giving a “woven” appearance:⁴ “The third technique, which is the one to be discussed here, is built up with headers and stretchers alternating in the *same* course. This is the technique which best fits the meaning of the term *emplekton*” (the italics are Karlsson’s).⁵ Karlsson goes on to speculate that a *diatonikon* wall, with long stones called *diatonoï* going from one face to another of the wall, might be a later and more sophisticated version of emplekton; but he admits that “The hypothesis is obviously based on very little evidence, and I will continue to use the term

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1 Luraghi 2008, 227-8.

2 Demand 1990, 107-19 (the quotations are from page 118).

3 It is not the purpose of this article to establish how emplekton masonry, as understood by Karlsson, did spread within the Peloponnese beyond arguing negatively that its arrival was not due entirely to Theban military engineers.

4 For more detail see Karlsson 1992, especially at 69, and the numerous illustrations in his article.

5 Karlsson 1992, 68.

emplekton for both of these wall techniques employing headers”.⁶ Any possible distinction between diatonikon and other walls plays no part in his discussion on the walls of Mantinea, Megalopolis, and Messene. There is also a useful discussion by Pimouguet-Pédarros of the relation between, on the one hand, the term ‘emplekton’ as used by modern scholars and, on the other, the – possibly somewhat different – ancient techniques and terminology.⁷ Lars Karlsson argues that *emplekton* first appeared in Sicily and then spread to mainland Greece: Pimouguet-Pédarros regards it as unproven that *emplekton* originated in Sicily, but does not try to date any example from mainland Greece earlier than the first known cases in Sicily.⁸ Karlsson lists the earliest known examples of *emplekton*, found – he argues – in Sicily, and then those in mainland Greece. To his catalogue Thouria should now be added.⁹ Of the sites in mainland Greece Karlsson first considers Sounion, but suggests that the earliest *emplekton* there belongs to the second half of the 4th century. He then examines what he calls “The walls of Epaminondas: Megalopolis, Mantinea and Messene”.¹⁰ He recognises that the construction of the walls of Mantinea “is not uniformly agreed to be the work of Epaminondas”, but finds it most likely that the walls of all three cities “are the result of a unified and single plan”.¹¹ Other scholars, not concerned with the *emplekton* technique, had already argued that the fortifications at all three cities were due to Epaminondas: for instance, Adam argued that Epaminondas founded Megalopolis and Messene, and that the wall-circuit at Mantinea is part of a programme of fortifications “entrepris à l’initiative d’Épaminondas”.¹²

It should be noted that not all recent discussions of Greek fortifications have adopted Karlsson’s definition

of *emplekton*. In the first volume of his *Dictionnaire méthodique de l’architecture grecque et romaine*, published in 1985, Ginouvès defined *emplekton* (and synonyms in other languages) as “la portion de construction entre les parements d’un mur complexe”, and in the third volume, published in 1998, he simply referred back to the definition of the first volume, without reference to Karlsson’s publication of 1992.¹³ Likewise Hellmann consistently defines *emplekton* as “Le grossier remplissage de pierraille et de galets d’un mur à parement(s) appareillé(s)”.¹⁴ However, Karlsson’s views have exercised some influence.

Cooper accepts Karlsson’s arguments, and develops the view that “Boiotians had become supreme when it came to the craft of fortification construction through most of the fourth century B.C.E.”. He writes of “The new cities of Epaminondas”, and attributes the fortifications of Mantinea, Megalopolis, and Messene to Theban military engineers.¹⁵

Luraghi gives a more nuanced view. In general he accepts that the spread of *emplekton* was due to Theban engineers:

All early examples of this highly sophisticated and easily recognizable technique are connected in one way or another with the Theban hegemony in the early fourth century, and recent scholarship has established that it was developed by Theban military engineers. In all likelihood, the walls of Thouria belong, together with those of Megalopolis and Messene itself, to the chain of fortifications built under Theban initiative in the framework of Epaminondas’ activity in the Peloponnese.¹⁶

However he also notes that Buckler, Nielsen, and Demand have tended to limit the role of Epaminondas in the foundation of Megalopolis.¹⁷ He does not at any point

6 Karlsson 1992, 69.

7 Pimouguet-Pédarros 2000, 74-7.

8 Pimouguet-Pédarros 2000, 76-7.

9 See Luraghi 2008, 33.

10 Karlsson 1992, 73-6.

11 Karlsson 1992, 74.

12 Adam 1982, 171-2 and 177.

13 Ginouvès Vol. 1, 52 (1985), Vol. 3, 29 (1998).

14 Hellmann Vol. 1, 348 (2002), Vol. 2, 353 (2006), Vol. 3, 395 (2010). Hellmann does not cite Karlsson on the definition of *emplekton*, but does cite him (Vol. 3, 310 n. 63) on “masonry chains”.

15 Cooper 2000, 156 and 175.

16 Luraghi 2008, 33.

17 Luraghi 2008, 210.

discuss the re-foundation and fortification of Mantinea, although it too has empekton: it is not clear what part, if any, he understands Theban engineers to have played in constructing the new walls of Mantinea.

If we test the view that the development of empekton masonry was due to Theban engineers by considering the cases of Messene, Megalopolis, and Mantinea, the results differ. There is no reason to doubt that Epaminondas was mainly responsible for the foundation of Messene. Luraghi has recently examined the question carefully, noting the part played by Argos and Arkadia, but making clear the importance of Epaminondas and Theban military architecture. It is concerning Megalopolis and Mantinea that questions arise.¹⁸

For Mantinea, Xenophon's *Hellenica* offers a narrative in which the sequence of events is very clear. After the battle of Leuktra in 371 the Athenians organised a conference at Athens for all Greek states that wanted to be parties to the King's Peace (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.1-3). The Mantineans, whose *polis* had been broken up into separate villages by the Spartans in 385 BC,¹⁹ then decided to re-unite into a single polis and to re-found and fortify their city. The Spartan king Agesilaos asked the Mantineans to refrain from walling their city, but they went ahead: other Arkadian cities sent men to help build the wall and the Eleans gave three talents (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.3-5). Xenophon does not explicitly mention the completion of the wall, but his subsequent narrative implies that it was completed (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.16, 19, 20). There follow in his account events – possibly contemporaneous – at Tegea including a proposal to create an Arkadian confederacy (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.6-9), and then a Spartan campaign against Mantinea led by Agesilaos (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.10-21). Troops from most Arkadian states assembled to face Agesilaos, but some still sided with Sparta: of the latter the Orchomenians, says Xenophon, did not want to join the *Arkadikon* (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.11-12, 16), and so it appears that an Arkadian confederacy already existed. In addition the Arkadians now had the Eleans as allies, who campaigned with them against Agesilaos (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.19); the Argives were probably also allied to the Arkadians,

since they soon appear alongside them (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.23). Xenophon does not mention the negotiations that had led to the alliance of the Boiotians with the Arkadians, Argives, and Eleans, but Diodoros (Diod. Sic. 15.62.3) tells us that the latter three states first sought an alliance with Athens, without success, and only then allied with the Thebans. Moreover, Diodoros' account is confirmed by Demosthenes (Dem. 16.12, 19-20). Xenophon however does tell us (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.19) that, while Agesilaos was campaigning in Arkadia, the Eleans told the Mantineans that they knew that the Thebans would come because they had themselves lent the Thebans ten talents: this implies that the Arkadians had not known whether the Boiotians would come, and so suggests that the alliance with Boiotia was recent. Agesilaos' campaign ended, and the Arkadians attacked Heraia in western Arkadia (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.22). The forces of the Thebans and their allies then arrived (Xen. *Hell* 6.5.22), and, after discussion with the Arkadians, Eleans, and Argives, conducted the famous campaign in Lakonia and Messenia of 370/69 BC. The narrative sequence makes it clear that Mantinea was re-founded and fortified well before Epaminondas came to the Peloponnese, or indeed was even involved diplomatically with Arkadia. The fact that the Arkadians and their allies first sought an alliance with Athens before approaching the Boiotians makes it extremely unlikely that there had been close contact between Thebes and Arkadia before the alliance was negotiated. Xenophon's account is coherent and credible, although it notoriously fails to mention Epaminondas, who first appears in the *Hellenica* at 7.1.41 in connection with events in Achaia in 366 BC. It is equally notorious that Xenophon completely fails to mention the foundation of Megalopolis, and there is nothing in his text to suggest where it might have appeared in his chronological scheme.²⁰

The main evidence that can be used against Xenophon's version of events comes from Pausanias, and Moggi has consistently argued in favour of Pausanias' report against that of Xenophon.²¹ Pausanias clearly had great admiration for Epaminondas, and offers a very favourable brief biography (Paus. 9.13.1-15.6). In it he says (Paus.

18 Luraghi 2008, 210-8. See also Grandjean 2003, 49-59, on the foundation of Messene.

19 Nielsen 2004, 519.

20 The argument set out in this paragraph has been presented by Demand 1990, 109-10, though in somewhat less detail.

21 Moggi 2006 and Moggi 2010; Moggi and Osanna 2010, 298; see also Moggi 1993 on Pausanias' view of Epaminondas.

9.14.4) that Epaminondas gathered the Mantineans again into their ancient city, while at 8.8.10, without mentioning Epaminondas, he says that the Thebans brought the Mantineans back to their *patris*. Pausanias also says (Paus. 9.14.4) that Epaminondas persuaded the Arkadians to destroy all the weak small towns in Arkadia and he founded a common *patris* for them, namely Megalopolis.²² At 8.27.2 Pausanias says that it would be just to call Epaminondas oikist of Megalopolis, and that Epaminondas urged the Arkadians to carry out the synoikism of Megalopolis and sent Pammenes with one thousand men to defend the Arkadians in case the Spartans tried to prevent the building of Megalopolis. In addition Pausanias (Paus. 8.52.4) says, in rather vaguer terms, that Epaminondas promoted the glory of Greece through Messene and Megalopolis, but does not in this context mention Mantinea. Finally Pausanias quotes an epigram (Paus. 9.15.6) inscribed on a statue of Epaminondas at Thebes saying that thanks to Epaminondas Messene received back its children and that by Theban arms Megalopolis was crowned, probably meaning that the walls of Megalopolis were built thanks to the protection of Theban forces.²³ From these various passages it is clear that Pausanias firmly believed that both the re-foundation of Mantinea and the foundation of Megalopolis were due to the initiative of Epaminondas.

In order to evaluate these various reports of Epaminondas' involvement in the fortification of Mantinea and Megalopolis the two cases will be considered in turn. For Megalopolis a first problem is the date of its foundation. The available ancient sources offer the dates 371/0 (Paus. 8.27.8), 370 or 369 (*Marmor Parium*), and 368/7 BC (Diod. Sic. 15.72.4). The arguments for and against the various dates are set out by Hornblower and Stylianos.²⁴ If, as Hornblower argues, the Tegean Proxenos killed in 370 BC (*Xen. Hell* 6.5.7) is the same man as the Tegean oikist of

Megalopolis also called Proxenos (Paus. 8.27.2),²⁵ then a decision to found Megalopolis must have been taken in 370 before Epaminondas and the Thebans arrived in the Peloponnese as allies of Arkadia, Argos, and Elis later in the year (*Xen. Hell* 6.5.19), though Epaminondas could still have helped during the process of construction. However, Proxenos is a fairly common name in Arkadia and elsewhere in the Peloponnese,²⁶ and the identification of the two Tegeans called Proxenos is therefore not absolutely certain. There is in fact no decisive argument for the date, and it is possible, as has been argued,²⁷ that different phases in the planning and execution of Megalopolis each found their place and date in the historical record.

Historians have tended to doubt how great a part Epaminondas played in the foundation of Megalopolis. Buckler and Lenschhorn do not consider Epaminondas to be the founder of Megalopolis, basing their arguments on the belief that the foundation can be securely dated to 368/7 BC, but no such certainty about the date is possible.²⁸ Demand, after reviewing the problem carefully, concludes that "the evidence for the involvement of Epaminondas is suggestive but not compelling".²⁹ Nielsen accepts Demand's arguments and does not consider Epaminondas to be the oikist of Megalopolis.³⁰ Tuplin states that "Pausanias' association of Epaminondas with Megalopolis (8.27.2) is problematic".³¹ Epaminondas was certainly not the oikist of Megalopolis, since, as Pausanias reports, the city was synoikised under the direction of a body of ten Arkadian oikists (Paus. 8. 27.3), and in claiming that it would be just to call Epaminondas the oikist Pausanias implicitly recognises that he was not in fact the oikist. Whether Epaminondas conceived the idea of founding Megalopolis and urged the Arkadians to do so may also be doubted,³² and the epigram at Thebes claims only that he arranged for military protection. Since however the

22 Megalopolis was clearly not the *patris* of all Arkadians, nor was it meant to be: in most of Arkadia the existing poleis continued.

23 On the interpretation of the epigram's words see Moggi 2010, 237-8.

24 Hornblower 1990 (refuting the arguments of Roy 1971, 591 for a date in 368); Stylianos 1998, 471-2.

25 Hornblower 1990, 72, 76.

26 Fraser & Matthews 1997, 378; Nielsen 2002, 421 n. 23

27 E.g. recently in Nielsen 2004, 520.

28 Buckler 1980, 107-8 and Buckler 2003, 318-9; Lenschhorn 1984, 170-1.

29 Demand 1990, 107-19; the conclusion is at 117.

30 Nielsen 2002, 419-21.

31 Tuplin 1993, 151 n. 13.

32 See the assessment of the evidence in Nielsen 2002, 419-21.

construction of Megalopolis probably took a considerable time,³³ it could be argued that Epaminondas, even if he was not responsible for the foundation of Megalopolis, might nonetheless eventually have had an opportunity to modify aspects of the fortification during its construction. It is true that, as Karlsson himself notes, “only very small sections of the city-wall were discovered and excavated”,³⁴ and it is therefore difficult to assess the techniques of fortification that may have been used there. The case of Megalopolis is thus inconclusive: the Arkadians may have had the necessary knowledge to build and fortify the city without Theban advice, and may very well have begun the construction before becoming closely associated with the Thebans, whether or not Epaminondas later had the opportunity to influence the form of fortification adopted.

As regards Mantinea, most historians who have written recently on the problem, other than Moggi, have come to a much clearer conclusion, namely that Epaminondas did not re-found Mantinea.³⁵ This view has been adopted recently, notably by Demand, Tuplin, Nielsen, and Akujärvi.³⁶ It remains therefore to consider whether Moggi can justify accepting Pausanias’ version of events over Xenophon’s, despite other scholars’ arguments to the contrary. Moggi rightly points to Xenophon’s failure to mention Epaminondas, and deduces a hostility on the historian’s part to Epaminondas and to the Thebans: Xenophon’s account certainly shows bias. Moggi does not, however, discuss the detailed chronological sequence narrated by Xenophon or suggest how Pausanias’ version could be reconciled with it. Such reconciliation in fact seems impossible: to accept Pausanias’ account of Epaminondas’ involvement in the re-foundation of Mantinea one must suppose that Xenophon’s narrative is consistently

wrong about events from late 371 BC until winter 370/69 BC, and in particular that the Arkadian Confederacy had been created and had already established diplomatic links with Thebes fairly early in 370 BC, so that when Agesilaos reached Mantinea the city had already been re-founded and re-fortified with Boiotian help, although Boiotian forces had not yet arrived in Arkadia. That sequence of events does not seem possible, and it is therefore preferable to follow Xenophon’s narrative. It is worth noting that the epigram on Epaminondas’ statue at Thebes made no mention of Mantinea, and indeed claimed only a relatively modest part for Epaminondas in the foundation of Megalopolis.

Thus the argument that fortifications using emplekton masonry were all due to Theban military engineers breaks down. They will have been present at the fortification of Messene, and possibly also at the construction of Megalopolis, but they were not at Mantinea. The re-foundation of Mantinea and its fortification were the work of the Mantineans themselves, helped by other Arkadian poleis and by the Eleans (*Xen. Hell* 6.5.5), and using the necessary technical specialists. The Mantineans may even have sought help from other cities, including Magnesia on the Maeander.³⁷

It is also worth noting that at both Mantinea and Megalopolis the wall circuit was built on a stone base surmounted by a brick wall, whereas at Messene the great walls built entirely in stone are still perfectly visible today.³⁸ The technical choices made for construction of the walls were therefore different at Mantinea and Megalopolis from those made at Messene.

Both Mantinea and Megalopolis developed a number of forts within their territory.³⁹ It has been suggested that

33 See e.g. Hornblower 1990, 76-7.

34 Karlsson 1992, 74.

35 Grandjean (2003, 50) evidently believes that Epaminondas played a part in the creation of Megalopolis, since she suggests, without discussion, that Epaminondas should be added to the list of oikists of Megalopolis.

36 Demand 1990, 108-9; Tuplin 1993, 151 n. 13: “The foundation of the Arcadian league and the rebuilding of Mantinea had nothing to do with Thebes”; Nielsen 2002, 419-21; Akujärvi 2005, 7: “The first and most obvious error in VIII 8.10 occurs in the very first sentence, where the Thebans (and indirectly Epaminondas) are given credit for the resynocism of Mantinea.”

37 Roy 2003.

38 On the walls of Mantinea, see Fougères 1898, 132-63 and Winter 1989, 189-92; on those of Megalopolis, see Petronotis 1973, 249-52. On the question of whether the walls now visible at Messene are the original 4th-century construction or a Hellenistic replacement, see Karlsson 1992 74-6, dating the walls to the 4th century and followed by Luraghi 2008 217-8. Grandjean 2003 50 n. 5 notes arguments for the 4th century without offering a judgment.

39 On the forts of Mantinea, see Pikoulas 1995, 244-55 (on forts at Pikerni, Nestani, Louka, Skopi, Magoula, and Elliniko), and Jost 2001-2; on those of Megalopolis, see Martin 1947-8, 139-43, and Pikoulas 1988, 180-7 (on forts in the southern part of Megalopolitan territory).

at least some of these forts would have been constructed at the same time that Mantinea was re-built and Megalopolis founded. Martin, in his detailed examination of the fort at Gortys in western Megalopolitan territory, suggested that it was built in 370-65 BC, and went on to say that “L’occupation thébaine et les buts politiques d’Épaminondas ont provoqué la construction d’une série d’enceintes que caractérisent les memes traits généraux: Mantinée, Messène, Gortys”.⁴⁰ As argued above, Epaminondas was not involved in the fortification of Mantinea, and we have no direct evidence that he was in any way responsible for the construction of the fortifications at Gortys. Martin also argues that the northern ramparts of the acropolis at Gortys are closely related in their style of masonry and technique of construction to the city wall of Messene,⁴¹ but, even if one accepts this close relationship, it does not permit a precise dating of the fort at Gortys. Martin also describes the walls of Gortys as being built in the *emplekton* technique, but defines *emplekton* as “comportant deux parements maçonnés en blocs puissants dont l’intervalle est rempli de pieraille et de terre”, i.e. without reference to the headers and stretchers that are fundamental to Karlsson’s definition.⁴² The numerous photographs that accompany Martin’s article do not suggest that any of the walls at Gortys were in the *emplekton* style as defined by Karlsson. It has also been suggested that the fort at Nestani in Mantinean territory may have been built when the town of Mantinea was re-built,⁴³ but Jost argues that the remains do not allow any precise dating.⁴⁴ When taken together, the smaller forts in Mantinean and Megalopolitan territory, though interesting and important, do not help to establish what part, if any, Theban engineers might have played at Mantinea and Megalopolis.

The Mantineans must have employed a military engi-

neer, or engineers, to design their city wall and oversee its construction. The communities of southern Arkadia were clearly able, in the 5th century BC and still in the 4th, to call on men with advanced skills in urban planning, including the building of city walls. The discovery at the modern village of Kyparissia, not far northwest of Megalopolis, of a previously unknown classical town laid out on a grid pattern and dated by the excavator to the middle of the 5th century BC shows a clear capacity for well-planned urbanisation in southwestern Arkadia at least two generations before the foundation of Megalopolis.⁴⁵ Moreover geophysical investigation has revealed that the town at Kyparissia was walled.⁴⁶ The early development of Megalopolis shows careful and imaginative planning.⁴⁷ The fortifications of the re-founded city of Mantinea show a desire to avoid the weaknesses of the earlier wall circuit, which the Spartans had breached by diverting a river, but also have, in the words of Winter, “features [...] typical of the new concept of ‘active’ rather than ‘passive’ defensive strategy that had evolved between the end of the 5th and the middle of the 4th century B.C.”.⁴⁸ Pausanias describes how Epaminondas recruited the necessary experts for the construction of Messene.⁴⁹ The Argive strategos Epiteles had some general responsibility, though there is some uncertainty about what exactly the relevant phrase in Pausanias means;⁵⁰ but Epaminondas sent for specialists who had the skills needed, as Pausanias puts it (Paus. 4.27.5), to lay out streets, build houses and sanctuaries, and create a wall circuit. Pausanias’ wording says nothing to suggest that these specialists were Boiotians or that they had previously been in some way linked to Epaminondas. Karlsson has argued that *emplekton* masonry was used in Sicily from c. 400 BC.⁵¹ If correct, that would allow a generation for knowledge of the technique to spread in the Greek world before Mantinea was re-built, and so

40 Martin 1947-8, 146.

41 Martin 1947-8, 146.

42 Martin 1947-8, 120-1.

43 Lawrence 1979, 146-8; Pikoulas 1995, 334-6.

44 Jost 2001-2, 297-8.

45 Karapanagiotou 2005 & Karapanagiotou 2010.

46 Karapanagiotou 2010, 129.

47 Roy 2007, 294.

48 Winter 1989, 191.

49 On Greek architects see recently Hellmann 2010, Vol. 3, 32-55.

50 Paus. 4.26.7; see Musti and Torelli 1991, 243; Auberger in Casevitz & Auberger 2005, 191.

51 Karlsson 1990, 70-2.

the Mantineans could equally well have recruited such specialists when they needed them, just as Epaminondas did for the building of Messene. Pimouguet-Pédarros notes that architects and craftsmen circulated freely and widely in the Greek world, and suggests that the spread of emplekton masonry need not have been a tidy step-by-step progression from Sicily first to mainland Greece, and then on to Asia Minor.⁵²

If it is accepted that the fortification of Mantinea, and indeed its re-foundation generally, were not due to an initiative of Epaminondas, but rather carried out before Epaminondas and the Boiotians were involved in the Peloponnese, then clearly the fortifications of Mantinea, Megalopolis, and Messene were not due to a grand plan conceived by Epaminondas. On the notion that there was a grand plan, whether conceived by Epaminondas or not, to build fortified cities on sites that would constrain Sparta's power in the southern Peloponnese,⁵³ it is important to remember that for movement on the northern frontier of Lakonia the most important location in southeastern Arkadia was not Mantinea but Tegea, Sparta's immediate neighbour; Tegea was already fortified, probably by the later 5th century.⁵⁴ Whether the Spartans wanted to move directly north from Sparta into Arkadia, or along the easier route up the Eurotas valley and into the Alpheios basin in Arkadia and then eastwards, they would come to Tegea. A fortified city at Mantinea would admittedly strengthen the defences of the eastern basins of Arkadia, but it would not be the primary obstacle to Spartan movement in the area. One important reason – among others – for the construction of Megalopolis was no doubt to impede Spartan movement up the Eurotas valley and into the Alpheios basin, from which they could continue southwest into Messenia, west to Triphylia, northwest to Elis, north into central Arkadia, or east to Tegea and beyond. The precise site used for Megalopolis was not chosen for its military strength, however,⁵⁵ and control of the Megalopolitan basin must have depended at least as much on the fact that the Megalopolitan basin was now under unified political control as on the military strength of the city. The loss of Messenia was certainly a major blow to the Spartans, but

a fortified city at Messene served mainly for defence if the Spartans invaded the region. In the troubled circumstances of the Peloponnese after Leuktra it was natural for any newly-built city to be fortified, and the wall circuits of Mantinea, Megalopolis, and Messene can be explained to a large extent by a desire to defend these sites. There is no need to suppose an overall strategic plan conceived by Epaminondas, or anyone else, in order to contain Sparta by a series of fortified cities.

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⁵² Pimouguet-Pédarros 2000, 89–90.

⁵³ See Demand 1990, 107–8, 202 on modern views for and against the existence of such a plan.

⁵⁴ Nielsen 2004, 532.

⁵⁵ Roy 2007, 292.

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