

Agora Excavations Preliminary Report – Summer 2014

Excavations were carried out in the Athenian Agora from June 9th to August 1st, 2014. This report is written for the 60-65 student volunteers who participated this summer. Though drawn largely from the US, the team also included students from 6 countries and four continents.

We acknowledge here with gratitude the support of the Packard Humanities Institute, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Randolph-Macon College, the Behrakis Family Foundation, and the Desnick/Herzig and Dunlevie families. Without their participation, and that of several other individuals, our work would not be possible. This brief account is very preliminary and any observations and conclusions are subject to revision as the material is studied in the future.

Section BΘ – (Plan 1 & Fig. 8-11)

Section BΘ, overlying the painted Stoa, was divided into two halves, supervised by James Artz (west) and Nick Seetin (east). In the western part we continued to expose the generally well-preserved rooms of the Byzantine houses of the 11th century. In one room, where a pithos was located in 2012, we uncovered a second pithos immediately adjacent, to the east, its mouth closed with a very large square tile. Another pithos was found in the room immediately to the north. These large vessels were usually buried under the floor of a room to provide additional storage space for wine, oil, or grain and are common in many medieval houses.

The eastern half of the section has generally been dug to deeper levels, though the walls seem largely contemporary with those found further west. All the walls are full of reused material: bits of gravestones are common, along with several large architectural blocks of limestone, some of which may be associated with the Painted Stoa. Other large blocks of marble may come from monuments set up in front of the Stoa. In the eastern section, a pithos found almost over the river, with its mouth at an appreciably lower level than any other in the area, suggests a somewhat earlier phase of the Byzantine settlement, as do the walls of this room (Room 1), which are more substantial and go appreciably deeper than any other Byzantine walls in this part of the section.

Inscribed Fragment – Leases of the Silver Mines at Laureion

A cleaning pass in Section BΘ east produced a fragment of an inscribed opisthographic stele on June 24, 2014. (Fig. 1) It proved to be part of the records of the *Poletai*, the state auctioneers who were responsible for leasing out the mineral rights for the state-owned silver deposits in southern Attica (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 47. 2-3). The full series of surviving *poletai* accounts was originally studied and published by Margaret Crosby: 'The Leases of the Laureion Mines', *Hesperia* 19, 1950, pp. 189-312. They have been republished by M. K. Langdon

under “Poletai Records” in *The Athenian Agora, XIX, Inscriptions*, Princeton 1991, pp. 53-143.

P. length: 0.18 m., p. H. 0.08 m., Th. 0.12 m. Letter height: 0.004 (O) – 0.006 m. (Σ).

Hymettian marble

Stoichedon

Face A:

...σ.ντ..σα...
...α Διοκλέους ε...
...ος πρὸς [ἡ]λίου ἀ[νιόν ...
...μενο Διοκλέιο...
5 ...ς Ἀχαρ: ἀπεγρ[άψατο...
...[μ]έταλλον παλαι[ὸν ...
.....Τιμησίου Σο[υν]...
...[Τιμ]ση[σί]ου

Face B:

...οτό...
...:Φαία...
...υ Σφέττ[ι:]....
...ου.πε...

The small letters, the opisthographic arrangement, the abbreviated demotics, and the interpuncts all allow the piece to be identified as an account or inventory, one of several series which survive, such as naval accounts, and lists of materials stored in various sanctuaries, like the Brauronion. Though fragmentary, the text indicates that this particular series was created by the state auctioneers or *poletai*. The format follows several others dated to the 4th century BC, where the location of a given mine being leased is identified by properties that bounded it on the surface. Thus in line 3 of Face A we have a reference to something lying toward the rising sun in the east, and in line 1 of Face B we have what might be a southern boundary of a lease: [ν]οτό[θεν]. Line 6 on Face A actually refers to a mine, and the personal names and demotics refer to lessees, or to the owners of the adjacent properties. Diokles (A, line 2), Timesios (A, line 7), and Phaiax (B, line 2) all appear in one of the best preserved of the series, I 5509. dated to 367/6 BC. The layout, abbreviations, and content of the new piece find their closest parallels with others dated to the 340's.

Our new fragment has wandered. Some 75% of the almost 100 known fragments were found within 20 meters from the Tholos and the area to the immediate south, suggesting that they were originally erected and displayed there, perhaps near or at a building known in antiquity as the *Poleterion* (Demosthenes 25. 57, etc.).

Section BZ Tomb J 1:11

Section BZ was supervised by Brian Martens. (**Plan 2**) Here we continued to explore the area north of the Classical commercial building, where we have little architecture but traces of deep, early fills and perhaps several disturbed tombs cut into bedrock. One cutting in particular went down ca. 1.50 m., with the bedrock undercut the deeper we went, creating a large chamber which seems to have been man-made. The depth of the excavated part of the chamber is ca. 1.10 m., and the cutting measures over 2.20 m. across; where it collapsed over the center of the chamber, the bedrock was ca. 0.40 – 0.50 m. thick. For the most part the fill within was reddish clay and homogeneous, with late Geometric sherds (ca. 700 BC) throughout. Near the bottom, several pieces of fallen bedrock seem to have been left undisturbed since the collapse, and under one of these we found a small shallow bronze bowl, ca. 0.10 m. in diameter, along with assorted fragments of bones. Next to it, along the north wall, was a semi-articulated skeleton, with parts of the skull and lower jaw oriented to the east, and fragments of vertebrae, and ribs in their appropriate location. The leg bones suggested a somewhat flexed position, with one leg bent with its knee to the north. Maria Liston identified the remains as those of a woman, perhaps in her thirties. To the east, we found a scatter of glass-paste beads, and small bronze cylinders which may have been spacers or wire for use in a necklace. (**Fig. 2**) All this suggested that we had a Mycenaean chamber tomb which collapsed in antiquity and was thoroughly cleaned out and filled in the late 8th century BC.

Following the rule of thumb that important finds arrive at the last minute, we found on July 31st, at the bottom of the chamber, a piriform jar (**Fig. 3**) with a painted imbricate pattern on the shoulder, thereby confirming the Mycenaean date of the original tomb. (LH IIIa = ca. 1350 BC; for a parallel from a nearby tomb, see *Hesperia* 2003, No. 31 on pp. 264-265). Also recovered was a second skeleton with a necklace of assorted beads, at least two of them of nicely polished carnelian. A side chamber or passage to the east and undug fill to the west will have to be explored in a future season before the full limits and configuration of the tomb are understood.

Scattered material elsewhere in the area also dated to the decades around 700 BC and included the rim of a Geometric bowl with a dog in pursuit of a hare (**Fig. 4**), the fragment of a large Geometric amphora with a bird painted on it (**Fig. 5**), and a largely complete 'Phaleron' cup of the sort named after the cemetery on the coast at Phaleron, (**Fig. 6**) presently under renewed excavation on the property of the Niarchos Center. Somewhat to the south, near the Classical commercial building there were deposits of fragmentary 5th century black-glazed material, and part of a handsome red-figured skyphos with a satyr holding a large mallet or hammer. (**Fig. 7**) Brian pointed out that a satyr with hammer is often associated with the story of the birth/creation of Pandora. A satyr play by Sophokles, written ca. 470-460 BC, carried the title *Pandora or The Hammerers* and is thought to have included a chorus of satyrs who beat the clay used to fashion Pandora. (see E. Reeder, *Pandora*, Princeton 1995, pp. 284-286).

Section BΓ

Section BΓ was supervised by Laura Gawlinski, continuing our exploration of the Panathenaic Way. Last year's trench was expanded northward, so as to cover almost the full width of the road. Several very hard-packed, level road surfaces of Hellenistic date were encountered. Here, too, no distinctive traces of wheel ruts were encountered, reinforcing the notion that this main thoroughfare, unlike other streets leading into the Agora, was closed to wheeled traffic. Lower down, in Classical levels, we excavated numerous pits of various depths and sizes. These have been encountered elsewhere and are usually interpreted as sockets to carry the supports for wooden bleachers or *ikria*, set up for spectators watching the Panathenaic procession and other events taking place along the roadway. From the position of the post-holes it would seem as though the course of the road shifted slightly over time, the earlier course running somewhat to the north of the Hellenistic one.

Other developments

The digital record-keeping was supplemented this year with the use of images taken by a drone. (**Fig. 8-10**) Early in the morning on July 6th, Hugh Thomas took a series of still and video photos over Section BΘ; some 900 pictures were taken, one every three seconds. James Herbst had marked out measured points on the ground and Daniele Pirisino was able to use the views for 3-D photogrammetry. In addition, Bruce Hartzler adapted the vertical images to allow excavators to plot their individual excavation units on the photos. (**Fig. 11**)

This summer also saw the appearance of the first stand-alone guide book for the Agora museum in the Stoa of Attalos, ably written by Professor Laura Gawlinski of Loyola University, Chicago. Detached from the site guide, the new format permits the inclusion of many more images, taken by photographer and deputy director, Craig Mauzy.

We are indebted to all those who contributed so effectively to the work. We worked, as always, in close collaboration with colleagues from the A' Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, to whom we are most grateful: Nikoletta Saraga, Clio Tsogka, and Maria Liaska. Professor Michael Laughy of Washington and Lee provided general oversight of the northern sections and conferred with Bruce Hartzler on the further development of iDig. Other staff members in the Stoa who contributed to the outdoor work in many ways include Sylvie Dumont and Pia Kvärnstrom in the Records office, and Maria Tziotziou and three Kress interns in the Conservation laboratory.

John McK. Camp II
August 2014

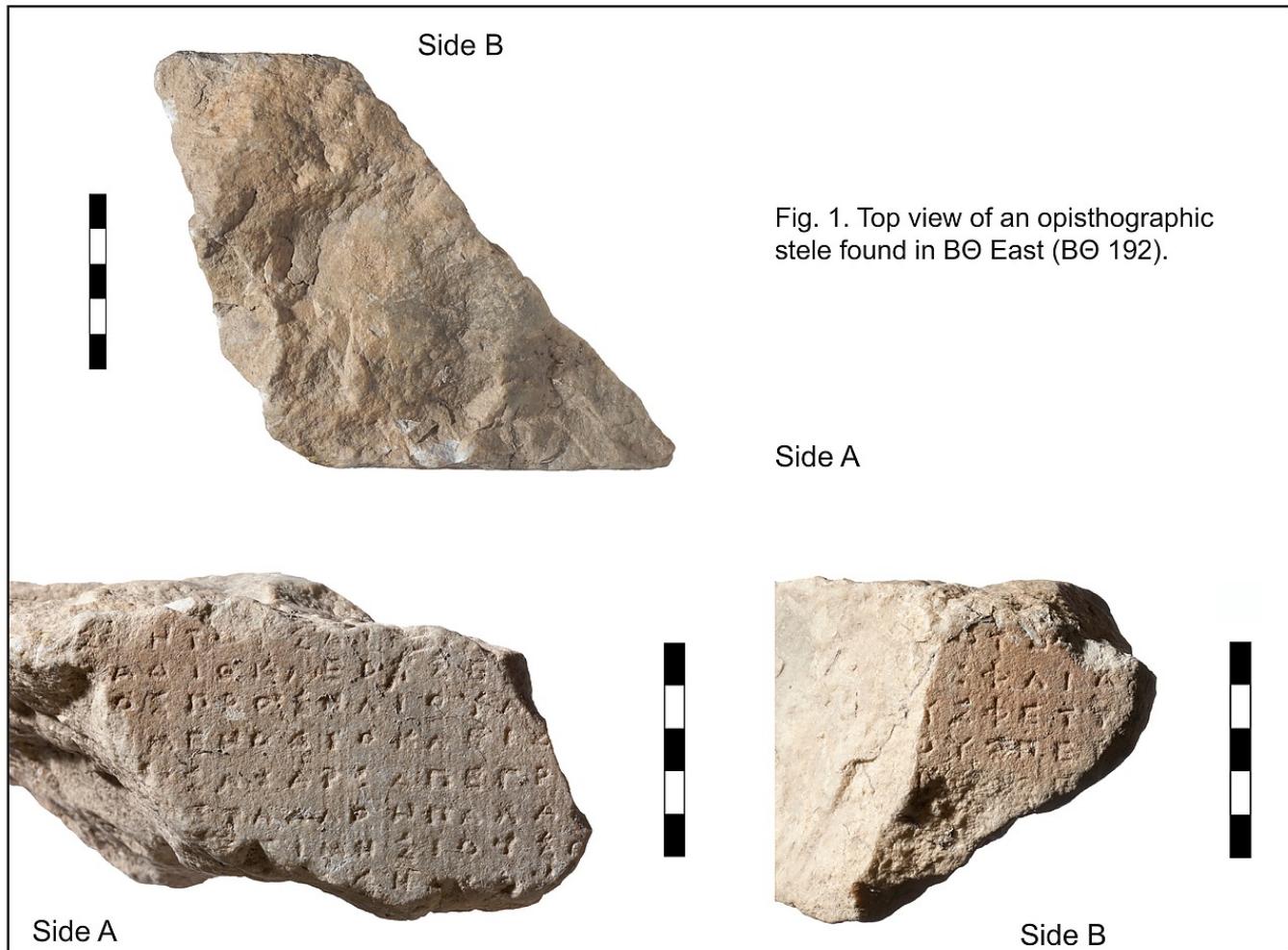


Fig. 2. Glass paste beads and small bronze cylinders.

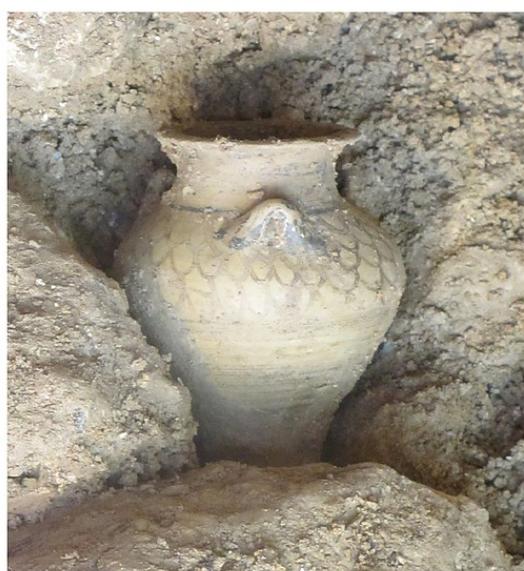


Fig. 3. Tomb J 1:11, a Mycenaean jar *in situ* and after a preliminary conservation treatment.



Fig. 4. Geometric bowl with a dog in pursuit of a hare.



Fig. 5. Fragment of a large Geometric amphora with a bird painted on it.



Fig. 6. 'Phaleron' cup.



Fig. 7. Red-figured skyphos with a satyr holding a large mallet or hammer.

Fig. 8. A drone takes off under the control of Hugh Thomas. A series of aerial photographs and a video were made of Section BΘ.



Fig. 9. A composite aerial view of Section BΘ East.



Fig. 10. A composite aerial view of Section BΘ West.

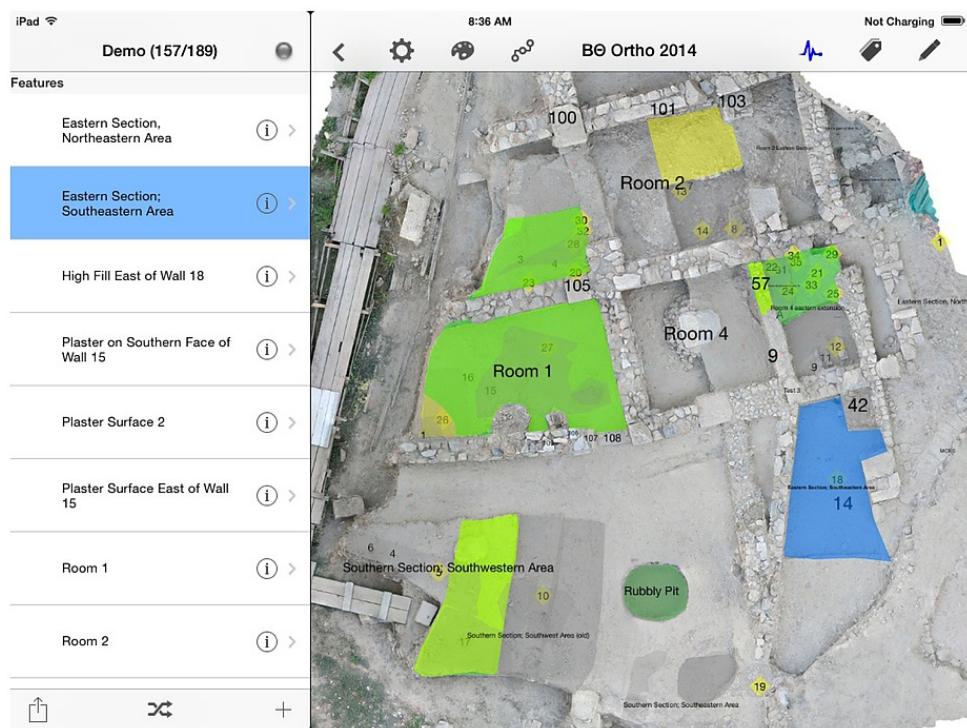
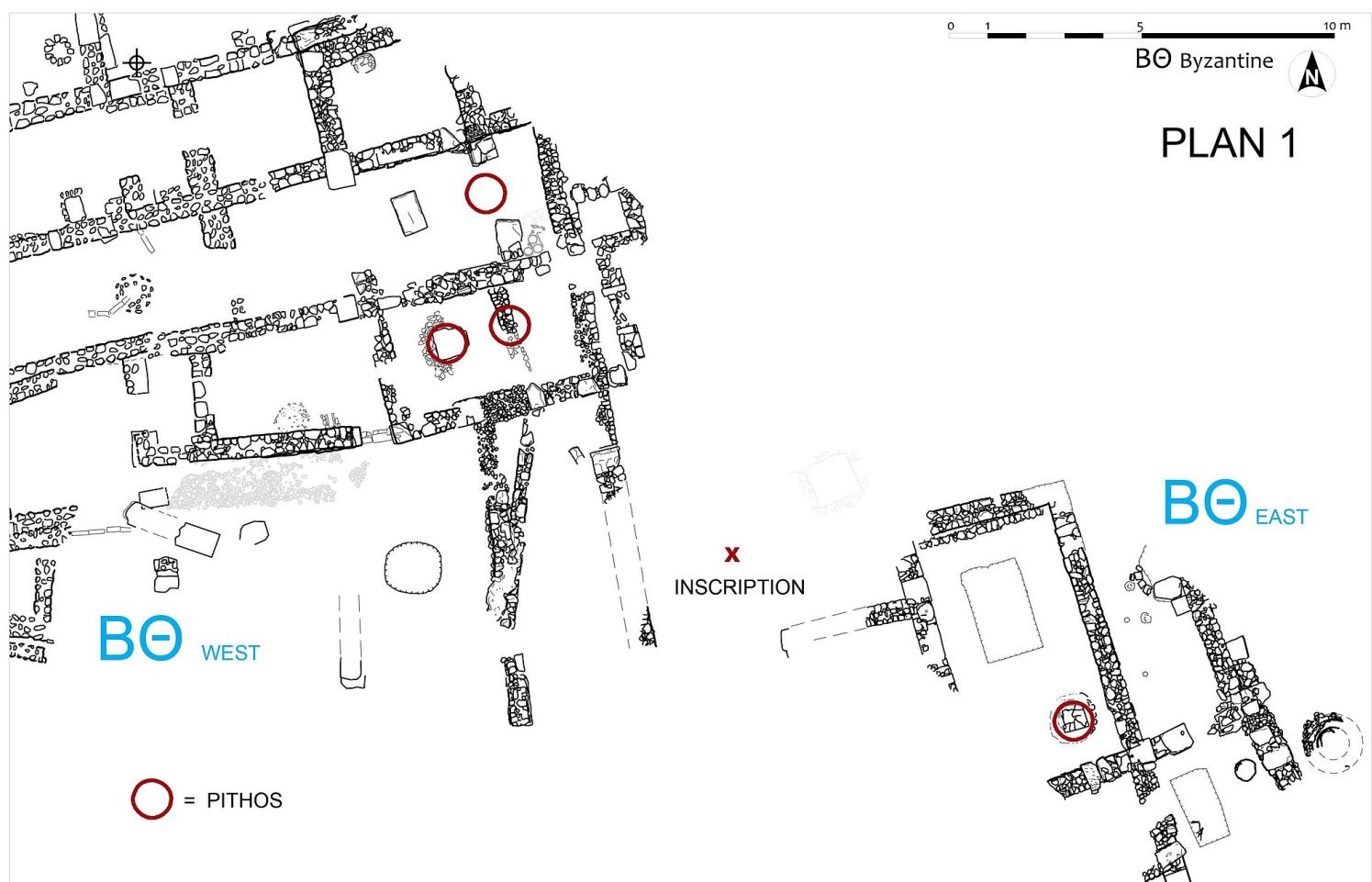


Fig. 11. A screen capture of iDig illustrating how the composite aerial photograph was incorporated into the digital records of Section BΘ West.



- Chamber Tomb J 1:11 (2014)
- Chamber Tomb J 1:10 (2013)

PLAN 2

