

EXCAVATION SUMMARY - 2009

Excavations were carried out in the Athenian Agora for eight weeks from June 8 until July 31, 2009. The excavation team consisted of 52 student volunteers and five supervisors, whose hard work is gratefully acknowledged here. Participants represented 32 American universities and colleges, and ten other countries. The excavations were made possible by a substantial grant from the Packard Humanities Institute, with contributions from Randolph-Macon College and private individuals. This is a very preliminary report, written primarily for the benefit and information of those who actively participated this past summer.

SECTION GAMMA (Laura Gawlinski)

In the area southwest of the Agora square, we continued our investigation of the Classical buildings south of the Tholos. [Fig 1] They lie between the 'Strategeion' and the house of Simon the cobbler, and are close to the square and to major public buildings. Despite their small size and irregular plan, because of their location so near the square and the Tholos, it has been argued or assumed that they served some official purpose. Following our work attempting to determine if the 'Strategeion' was a civic or commercial building it seemed worthwhile to try and determine if this complex of buildings was civic, commercial, or domestic in function, especially in view of their proximity to the house of Simon, which seems to have been both domestic and commercial in nature. The plans of these buildings are not obviously domestic, but they would suit either a commercial or a non-monumental public function. Among other things, the excavations this year have clarified the plans of the three buildings, grouped around a central courtyard.

The buildings were excavated in the 1950's and only limited floor levels remained to be investigated. Beneath one of the floors were two long deep pits cut into bedrock, filled with debris and large fragments of amphoras in the 4th century BC. Two pits with similar debris have been found in previous seasons to the west. More useful was a tile-lined well found in the courtyard of the complex. [Fig 2] Debris thrown or dropped down the shaft might well reflect the activities of those drawing water from it. If so, then the buildings have a strong domestic or commercial look to them. Recovered were numerous pyramidal loomweights [Fig 3], small oil flasks (squat lekythoi), cosmetic boxes (pyxides), and cooking wares, all suggesting the presence and activities of women. The pottery, which includes numerous fragments of late red-figure, seems to date to the first half of the 4th century BC. [Fig 4] Fragments of a Panathenaic amphora provided welcome confirmation of the date; the painted inscription preserves part of the name of the presiding magistrate, Dietrephes, who was archon in 384/3 BC. [Fig 5]

The well is among the earliest we have that were tile-lined: only two are earlier (I 17: 1 and C 19: 9) and two are roughly contemporary (G 14: 2 and G 16: 1), representing a technology which became common in the 3rd century BC and later. The well as we have it is only ca. 3.00 m. deep and seems to have been abandoned in antiquity during construction: the average depth for a well of this period is between 12 and 15 meters, no water was reached, and we did not find a period-of-use deposit at the bottom.

Civic activity in the area of the well is suggested by only a single dikast's token, used to assign seats in the lawcourts: a simple bronze disk, the size and shape of a coin, stamped with the letter B on both sides.

SECTION BETA THETA (Mike Laughey and Kevin Daly)

This large section, overlying the building identified as the Stoa Poikile, was excavated at its eastern and western ends. At the west [Fig 6], we encountered the bottoms of foundations of early modern buildings built on the orientation of the streets as laid out in the 19th century, following the cardinal points of the compass. Remains of several equines were found, the bones largely disarticulated, as well as a large, shallow lime slaking pit. Even today covering the remains of a horse corpse with lime is recommended and/or required. Our burials seem to date to the 16th century, when this area was just outside the limits of the built-up part of the city. [Fig 7]

The fill into which these remains were set also dated largely to the 16th century AD, when Athens was under Ottoman control. A great deal of fragmentary pottery was found, much of it decorated. Typical were the slip-painted wares (open bowls decorated with yellow or white concentric circles on a brown background) and green monochrome sgraffito wares. There was no architecture associated with the layers producing this pottery and - like the later horse burials - the material may indicate that this area was used as a dumping ground at the edge of the inhabited area. Lower layers produced various middle Byzantine pottery types (green- and-brown painted wares, sgraffito, and the like), material similar in date to the houses of the 12th and 13th centuries found in the adjacent areas to the west (*Hesperia* 66, 1997, pp. 521- 546). The associated architecture, mostly rubble walls, has not been reached but can be seen in the scarps.

In the eastern area we uncovered walls of the Byzantine period, presumably those of modest houses. [Fig 8] These follow the northeast/southwest orientation set as early as the 5th century BC by the course of the Eridanos river, which runs through this part of the section. The walls are of rubble, made up of assorted blocks, stones, and tiles set in clay. Various installations were found: a clay-lined rectangular pit or hearth, the lower part of a large jar pithos, and the mouth of a large built subterranean pithos with its cover slab still in place. Pottery suggests a 10th century date for most of the walls. This area overlies the front of the Poikile Stoa, which must have been one of the most public areas of the Agora, especially desirable for the display of commemorative monuments. This will perhaps explain the high incidence of good worked blocks of limestone and marble found reused here in the later walls.

SECTION BH North (Johanna Hobrathschk)

In this area we removed most of the Middle Byzantine walls, exposed several years ago, which overlie the east end of the Stoa Poikile. [Fig 9] Material and pottery from the demolition supports a date in the 10th century AD for most of the walls, presumably the remains of modest houses. With their removal, more of the remains of the back wall and two interior columns of the Poikile were exposed. In addition, late Roman rubble walls dividing the stoa into rooms were cleared. It seems that the building was first divided longitudinally, with walls running between the interior Ionic columns; somewhat later crosswalls running from the interior to the exterior columns were added, dividing the interior space into smaller units. Legislation concerning the walling off of public buildings for private use appears in both the Theodosian Code (XV) and the Codex Justinianus (I and VIII): (see also H. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century*, Athens 2006, pp. 186-208). A concentration of bronze coins

in the late Roman levels suggests that the new rooms were used as shops. Associated pottery indicates that these modifications were made in the 5th and 6th centuries, before the building went out of use at the end of the 6th century, after which it was extensively quarried for building material.

Assorted pieces of reused material were recovered from the Middle Byzantine walls. Included among them was a fragmentary inscription, probably of the 4th or 3rd century BC, preserving only parts of three lines of text. It is from near the top of the stone, which carries a handsome cyma reversa moulding. A partly preserved cutting on top suggests that the piece served to carry an added relief or Herm.

More of the original masonry of the back wall of the Stoa was exposed, confirming the fine and careful construction which has long been observed at the western end of the building. Newly exposed this year is a run of the exterior of the euthynteria course supporting the orthostates. The joints seem to have been carefully beveled, a construction feature of numerous buildings, mostly - but not exclusively - temples: T. Hodge, *AJA* 79, 1975, pp. 333-347. [Fig 10]

Behind the back wall of the Stoa, starting at about the level of the top of the euthynteria, we encountered a broad trench, ca. 1.10 m. wide, running parallel to the wall. The fill within was hard-packed with a fair amount of fragmentary pottery. Within this cutting we uncovered two terracotta pipelines, both of which had been found behind the western end of the Stoa. [Fig 11] They are made in sections with carefully collared joint and service holes at regular intervals and both were presumably used to carry fresh water. The smaller, upper one seems to date to the 4th century BC. The larger, lower one is contemporary with the stoa, dating to the 2nd quarter of the 5th century BC. It has also been traced some hundred meters to the west in rescue excavations carried out by the Greek Archaeological Service, and by the German excavators of the Kerameikos, where it passes out through the Dipylon gate. Given its date and the fact that it seems to be carrying fresh water out of the city towards the north-west, it is tempting to associate this aqueduct with the passage in Plutarch (*Life of Kimon* 13.8) where the statesman Kimon is credited with “converting the Academy from a waterless and arid spot into a well watered grove, which he provided with clear running tracks and shady walks”.

SECTION BZ (Marcie Handler)

In this section we continued the exploration of the Classical Commercial Building. Towards the north the plan was clarified by the discovery of a cross-wall between the rooms, allowing us to identify at least six adjacent rooms in a row, all opening directly on to the street to the west. Much of the work was concentrated in the two northernmost rooms. In one, we tried to clear the area of a collapsed cistern, associated with a shaft found two years ago to the east and dating to the 3rd century BC. This interpretation was drastically emended in the final week. As we went down in the cutting we found an intact Mycenaean alabastron (14th/13th century BC) [Fig 12], and it now looks as though the collapse might be of the bedrock roof of a Mycenaean chamber tomb rather than a Hellenistic cistern. Two similar tombs were found in the 1990's somewhat to the south on more or less the same line, east of the ancient road (K2: 5 and J-K 2: 2 = *Hesperia* 72, 2003, pp. 248 and 254-273).

Two more pyres were uncovered this season, bringing the total for this building to

twelve, the largest concentration found in the Agora within a single building. [Fig 14] As always, the deposits consisted of several small-scale cooking pots, a drinking cup, a lamp, and several small saucers and/or plates. The ones found this season seem to date to the second half of the 4th century BC. The function and meaning of these common but enigmatic deposits will be the subject of an intense study this coming year by Susan Rotroff.

From a level of late Roman fill at the north we recovered what seems to be the strut or support for a marble statue, carved in the form of a palm tree. [Fig 13] The leaves are somewhat casually carved, but two clusters of dates are more carefully rendered. While some association with Leto, Apollo, and Artemis might seem probable, an immediate parallel is the small statue of Hermes (S1054) found in a well on the north slope of the Areopagos (*Hesperia* 8, 1939, pp. 236-238), which also has a palm tree as a support on the god's right side.

OTHER WORK

Under the supervision of Amber Laughy, assisted by Harry, we processed and archived a large collection of organic material recovered from water sieving over the past 35 years. [Fig 15] Many samples had been collected but not sieved, others had been sieved but not sorted. All samples have now been sieved, sorted, and entered on a database.

In addition to a site tour, Agora scholars offered afternoon sessions on their fields of interest: Susan Rotroff on excavation pottery and Maria Liston on human osteology. Bruce Hartzler and Craig Mauzy also managed to set up a wireless connection between the Stoa and Sections Beta Theta and Beta Zeta, which now allows the supervisors access to the entire database from their trenches.

John McK. Camp II

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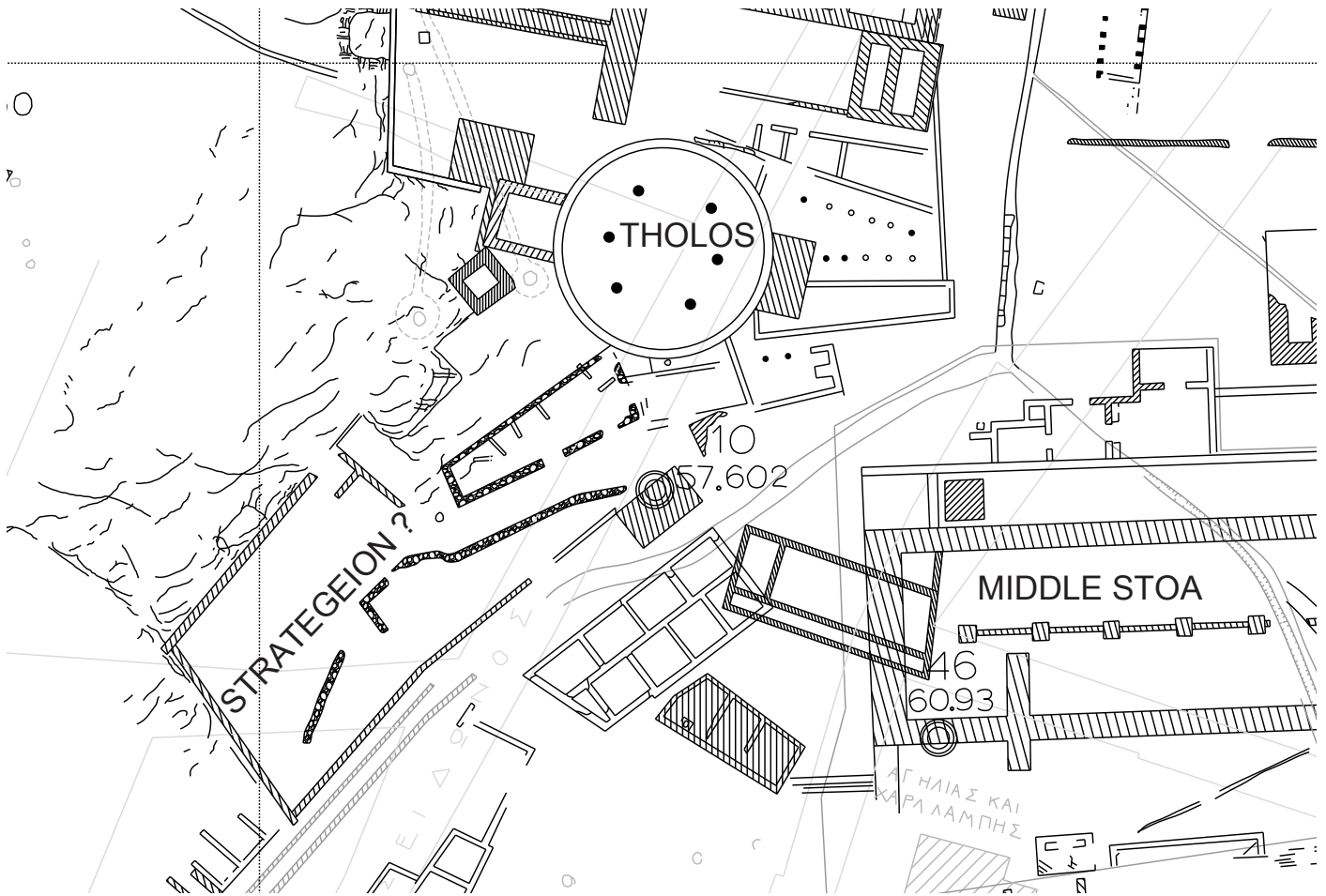


Fig 1 Plan of the southwest corner of the Agora square.



Fig 2 (left) Laura Gawlinski descending into the well in Section Γ to complete final measurements. (right) A reconstructed terracotta well liner from the well. Three identical pieces would have formed a circle. Each ring (of three) would then be placed one on top of each other to line the well.



Fig 3 Terracotta loomweights.



Fig 4 Black glazed cup from well.



Fig 5 Fragments of a Panathenaic amphora.



Fig 6 Initial phase of dismantling the walls at the west end of section BΘ.



Fig 7 Lisa Mays excavating a horse burial and (above) detail of a lower jaw of one of the skeletons.



Fig 8 Byzantine walls revealed in BΘ east.



Fig 9 Dismantling Byzantine walls in BH north; workmen removing a large block.



Fig 10 Investigating the area behind the back wall of the Painted Stoa.



Fig 11 The two terracotta pipelines discovered behind the back wall of the Painted Stoa.



Fig 12 Mycenaean jar, possibly from a disturbed burial.



Fig 13 Marble strut or support for a statue in the form of a palm tree.



Fig 14 One of the pyres discovered in Section BZ. (top)
Debbie Sneed holding one of the pots from a pyre. (right)



Fig 15 Amber Laughy (and Harry) supervising work at the water sieve while Pavla Gkantzi-Drapelova, Michael Washburn and Kelly Hughes get their hands wet.