

AGORA 2012 - PRELIMINARY REPORT

Excavations were carried out in the Athenian Agora from June 11 to August 3, 2012 with a team of some 60 student volunteers, representing 30 universities and eight countries. This is a very preliminary account of the results of the work this season.

As always, the work was made possible with the collaboration of the Packard Humanities Institute, with the additional support of Randolph-Macon College, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and the Behrakis Foundation. It is a pleasure to acknowledge here their contributions to our work. We are deeply indebted also to our collaborators in the A' Ephoreia, Nikoleta Saraga and Kleio Tsoga, as well as the Ephor, Eleni Kourinou. The indoor staff of the Stoa of Attalos, provided additional support of all sorts, as usual.

Excavations were carried out in four areas, each under the supervision of an experienced veteran of earlier seasons, whose work is gratefully acknowledged here. We concentrated mostly on the area overlying and in front of the Painted Stoa, at the northwest corner of the Agora, and on the Panathenaic Way just to the south. (Fig. 1)

SECTION BETA GAMMA

In Section Beta Gamma, supervised by Laura Gawlinski with Mary Conley, we continued to dig Hellenistic and Classical road levels of the Panathenaic Way in two trenches. (Fig. 2) The eastern trench was laid out so as to reveal more of the stone sockets for wooden posts that made up part of a *perischoinisma* (roped enclosure), attested in the area by Plutarch (*Lives of the Ten Orators = Moralia*, 847a) and recognized last year following excavations by the A' Ephoreia in the bed of the ΗΣΑΠ railway in 2010-2011. Several very hard-packed layers of road surface were stripped away. The most substantial dated to the 4th century BC, when the road farther west near the Royal Stoa was extensively graded. In the final week one of the **stone post-holes** at the east was uncovered (Fig. 3), giving us the full dimensions of the area that could be roped off: ca. 12 by 15 m. As restored, nine posts are set along the north and south, with eight along the east and west. We are continuing to try and refine the chronology of when and for how long the enclosure may have been in use in the 5th century BC and just how it functioned with the Panathenaic Way.

The numerous post-holes found do not seem to make any regular pattern and they differ considerably in diameter, depth, and probable date. Many must have been used to support the *ikria*, wooden grandstands known to have been set along the Panathenaic way for spectators of the procession (Athenaeus 4. 167 ff.), but it is hard to tell which ones work with which. Other *ikria* were used in early times for temporary wooden seating around the orchestra (Photios: *Ikria* and *Orchestra*; Pollux 7. 125, etc.).

In the western trench we also explored numerous road surfaces, amorphous gravel blobs, and assorted post-holes, in an attempt to determine if the carefully-laid, level, and smooth road surfaces found in earlier years to the west continued to the east. Thus far, they seem not to.

SECTION BH

In Section BH, supervised by Johanna Hobradsch with Brian Martens, we excavated a **Well (M 2:1)**, at the extreme eastern edge of the section (Fig. 4 & 5). The upper part was stone-lined and reused in the Byzantine period. Below, it was tile-lined, made out of rings of three specially made well-tiles, creating an inner diameter of ca. 0.73 m. It was excavated to its full depth of ca. 12 m., allowing more

than half the team to have an opportunity to dig in it. Material from the well suggests that it was in use for a century or more. Pottery was abundant, well over 100 pieces, many of them recovered intact (Fig. 6). The large majority were small pitchers or mugs with wheel-ridged bodies and obliquely gouged lines, covered with a thin dull wash. This is a type well known in the Agora, dating from the 4th and 5th centuries AD. Also common were large round-bottomed wheel-ridged amphoras in a coarse yellowish tan clay, many with cursive dipinti painted in red on their shoulders. Several other shapes, including cooking pots, are represented in smaller numbers, along with several coins and intact lamps.

Generally, the material looks close to that found last year in well L 2: 2 which lies only 3 meters to the west, though close examination suggests the new well started somewhat earlier, perhaps as early as the mid-4th century AD. Coins, rosette lamps, and bowls with painted spirals came from the lower levels and are usually dated to the 4th century (Fig. 7a & b). It seems, therefore, that this well predates the arrival of Alaric and his Visigoths in 396 AD, and suggests that it was in use while the building still functioned as a public stoa. In the upper levels the material dates to the 5th century, matching that from L 2:2. The abundance of pitchers, mugs, and amphoras in both wells suggest that rooms created by walling up the open colonnades may have served as taverns or wineshops at this time.

At a level about 0.30 m. above the deposits of whole and intact pottery, we had a layer of **broken rooftiles** (Figs. 8 a-e). A fair number of fragments of pan and cover tiles of a Corinthian roofing system were recovered, along with an antefix and a sima. Many of the pieces were covered with a thin layer of finer tan/yellow clay, which in some cases was painted. Consultation with Nancy Winter (*Greek Architectural Terracottas*, Oxford 1994, and *Hesperia* 59, 1990, pp. 1-323), suggests that some of the pieces could go on the stoa. In particular, the well-preserved *antefix* with faint traces of painted decoration finds its best parallels in the first half of the 5th century BC (*Hesperia* 59, 1990, p. xxv, nos. 46-48; Buschor's *Stirnziegel* XII and XVII). The large fragments of angular *cover tiles* might also be from the same series. The other obvious piece of interest is the *sima*. The flange indicates that it is a raking *sima*, that is, from the sloping edge of the roof at the short end of the building. It, too, carries traces of painted decoration, including a meander pattern. The profile is close to Buschor's *Sima* XXV, which he dates to the Hellenistic period, so although the piece was found right at the eastern end of the building, if it came from there it must be seen as a later replacement.

Also welcome this season was our first look at the **east wall of the Painted Stoa** (Fig. 9), made of grayish-tan poros limestone. It lies at the extreme east end of the section, largely concealed by the lining of a modern well or bothros, which we stripped away. Behind, the wall is very well preserved by our standards. At least six orthostate blocks are preserved *in situ*, three from the outer row and three from the inner. The complete orthostates measure 1.00 m. long, by 0.30-0.32 m. thick, and 0.91 m. high. The joints within each row are held by iron double-T clamps 0.21 m. long, set in lead, while the inner and outer rows are not clamped to each other. Where we have them, the joints of the inner and outer orthostates align, and in general the construction of the wall looks very similar to a contemporary building in Delphi, the Lesche of the Knidians, which was also decorated with paintings done by Polygnotos of Thasos (Pausanias, 10. 25 ff., Plutarch, *De def. orac.* 6, etc.).

The surface of the faces of the inner orthostates have split off and large pieces were found built into the stone lining of the modern shaft. Despite this damage, these are the first inner orthostate blocks we have found, making this stretch of the east wall the best preserved part of the building we have seen thus far, and we now have both ends of the stoa. Its interior dimensions are thus 48 m. long, and 10 m. deep, while the exterior dimensions, measured on the steps, should be ca. 51 by 12.50 m., with 23 exterior Doric columns and 11 interior Ionic columns.

The orthostates rest on a foundation course of soft yellowish poros limestone 0.26 m. high, which in turn rests on one 0.42 m. high; only the top edge of the third and presumably lowest course of foundations was exposed.

SECTION BZ

We also excavated at the north end of Section BZ, apparently beyond the northern limits of the Classical Commercial Building. Various hard-packed fills were encountered, with little associated architecture. Most of the fills were late archaic in date, according to the pottery, confirmed by several **ostraka**. These included three of Xanthippos, the father of Perikles, and one of Aristeides, the son of Charops, for whom previously only a single example was known (M. Lang, *Agora XXV, Ostraka*, p. 34, no. 19). Xanthippos was ostracized in 484/3 BC and a large deposit of ostraka bearing his name and that of Themistokles was found some 25 meters to the south. This year's ostraka were found in a pit. Two other archaic finds of interest were found in fills somewhat further north and are described below.

One of the more attractive finds from this season is a small, **black-figured lekythos** (Fig. 10). It is largely complete, missing only the handle and mouth: p. H.: 0.14 m., diameter: ca. 0.055 m. The scene painted on the body shows a chariot with charioteer and a hoplite alongside. A turning post or stele marking the finish line, seen behind the horses, suggests that we are in the field of competition, not warfare. In all probability, the scene represents an *apobates*, the unusual event in the Panathenaic games which involved an armed competitor jumping on and off a moving chariot. The actual event took place in the Agora, along the Panathenaic Way, ending at the Eleusinion. The heads and bodies of two horses can be seen, but the flurry of eight legs, both front and back, make it clear that a quadriga is represented. The warrior is seen with the body of the chariot blocking much of his body; his feet can be seen below the chariot, indicating that he is not a passenger but is running alongside. He wears helmet and breastplate and seems to be carrying spears. Next to him the charioteer stands in his vehicle, dressed in the long-flowing, belted garment familiar to us from the Delphi charioteer. The painting is not of the first order, but is quite detailed and well-preserved, with the use of incision and added purple and white (turning-post, charioteer).

Black-figured lekythoi of this type are common from the Agora (M. Moore and M. Z. Philippides, *The Athenian Agora XXIII, Attic Black-Figured Pottery*, Princeton 1986, nos. 787-1256). The row of double dots above the scene, the rays on the shoulder, and the foot in two degrees (a vertical element over a low torus) are features of many of the lekythoi of the Haimon Group (no. 1182-1237), as is the scene itself. In *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painting*, (pp. 544-545, no. 149-183), Beazley lists 35 BF lekythoi with the scene of a chariot, dismounted warrior (often carrying spears), and goal-post, all attributed to the Haimon Group. Among the seventy-five entries under 'apobates' in the Beazley archive database, there are fifty-nine black-figured lekythoi attributed to the Haimon painter or group, usually dated ca. 525-475 BC. The closest parallel to our piece is in the Rijksmuseum in Leiden (Catalogue no. RO II 1 = CVA 2, 65, pl. 196). Surprisingly, there are very few surviving Panathenaic prize amphoras with this scene; only three are listed in the Beazley archive database. A handful of other representations, mostly later and in red-figure, are known on other shapes. The event is also depicted on the Parthenon frieze and in marble reliefs of the 4th century BC (e.g. Agora S 399).

From the same area as the lekythos, just a little deeper, we also found a tiny **electrum coin** probably of the 6th century BC: weight: 0.7 grams, diameter: 6.5-7.5 millimeters (Figs. 11 a & b). It has the mark of a punch on one side, while the obverse shows the head of a bull. Gold or electrum coins from the Agora excavations are very rare; this one comes from a roughly contemporary archaic context and may be our earliest. The amount of wear suggests that the coin circulated for a while before

being buried. At least six other examples of this type are known (C. Seltman, *Athens: its History and Coinage before the Persian Invasion*, Cambridge 1924, p. 193 and pl. XIV: Group J, No. 310) weighing 0.65-0.68 grams. Early electrum coins of Athens usually have the owl as their device, but Plutarch (*Life of Theseus* 25) claimed that Theseus struck early coins with a bull on it, and Philochoros (schol. Aristophanes, *Birds* 1106, Pollux ix. 60) says that early Athenian coins had a bull. A bull's head also appears on 'Wappenmunzen', the German term used for a series of silver coins minted in Athens in the 6th century BC, using a variety of symbols before Athena and the owl became the standard devices for Athenian coins. In pre-coinage days, the 7th century law-code of Drako denominated all fines in bulls.

Electrum is a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver which is especially common in the earliest coins of Lydia, where coinage was invented, and the neighboring Greek cities along the coast of Asia Minor, such as Miletos, Ephesos, Samos, Phokaia, and Klazomenai. Athens is the only mainland city to use it. The value of the coin is not certain, because the gold/electrum to silver ratio changed over time and differed from city to city, though electrum/silver was about 10:1 and gold/silver 12:1. Contemporary silver coins were usually 8.6 grams for a silver didrachm (= two drachmas), the common denomination for the 'Wappenmunzen'. Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 10) also suggests that the early denomination was the didrachm. If so, then the piece may be worth about two days' wages in antiquity.

In all probability the coin was minted during the time of the tyrant Peisistratos; J. Kroll (*ANSMN* 26, 1981, pp. 1-32) dates the contemporary silver didrachms, including those with a bull's head, to somewhere between 546-518 BC. It may be that the electrum came from Ionia, to the east, but there is another possibility. During his exile from Athens before 546, Peisistratos had access to gold and silver from Thrace and hired mercenaries to aid his return:

*...he went on to the neighborhood of Panageaeus [a mountain in Thrace with large deposits of gold and silver] where he got money and hired soldiers, and in the eleventh year went again to Eretria, and now for the first time set about an attempt to recover his power by force, being supported in this by a number of people, especially the Thebans and Lygdamis of Naxos, and also the knights who controlled the government of Eretria. Winning the battle of Pallenis, he seized the government and disarmed the people... (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 15. 2-3).*

Peisistratos' exile in Eretria is also confirmed by Herodotos (1. 61- 62) and the Eretrian connection is of interest because the facing bull's head was also a device used on their coinage. Our new coin, of electrum rather than silver, may well have been mined in Thrace and used by Peisistratos to help pay those who returned him to power in Athens from Eretria in the years around 546 BC.

Digging low down in the area we also got several early and separate deposits of pottery dating to the 7th, early 6th, and early 5th centuries BC. The 7th century material is especially rare and included the rim of a bowl decorated with a lion.

SECTION BETA THETA EAST

In this area, supervised by Matt Baumann, with Daniele Pirisino and Nick Seetin, we continued down within several rooms of the Byzantine period. As always the fill was largely undifferentiated, with only a few well-defined floors. From their relative depths and bonds it seems clear that the walls represent at least two construction phases. The more substantial one is built of rubble, with numerous large reused ancient blocks; several of limestone, may well have come from the Painted Stoa; other handsome marble blocks, with evidence for clamps and dowels and treated with anathyrosis,

have yet to find a home.

SECTION BETA THETA WEST

In this area, supervised by James Artz, with Anne Duray and David Schneller, we exposed the upper parts of Byzantine walls, nicely defining several rooms and at least two periods of construction. At the southwest an area roughly paved with broken tiles set loosely in lime mortar perhaps suggests a courtyard, roadway, or workspace open to the sky. At the northwest, a collection of four coarse-ware Byzantine pots was found broken in situ, along with a coin which seems to date them to the 11th century AD (Fig. 12). Other installations were found in other rooms: a drain tile set close to the wall with indications that considerable burning had taken place in and around it, and a large stone slab carrying signs of heavy footwear set at or in a Byzantine floor level. Its interpretation will have to wait until next season

OTHER INDOOR/OUTDOOR WORK

Bruce Hartzler continued to improve and refine the record-keeping capabilities of iDig, while Daniele Pirisino and James Herbst continued to explore the use of digital 3D modeling as a recording tool; the results so far have been very impressive and promising.

A major rearrangement of the north basement storage room was undertaken by Miltiades Kyliandreas and Artemios Sachtouris, supervised by Sylvie Dumont. Hundreds of large fragments of amphoras were cleaned and transferred to new shelving in the southeast workroom, freeing up much needed space for our expanding collection of inventoried architectural and sculptural pieces.

A significant change took place on the upper storey of the Stoa (Fig. 13 a & b). With the help of an EEA grant, the A' Ephoreia completely redesigned the displays to emphasize the collection of Hellenistic and Roman sculpture; the sculptures and architecture were cleaned, a new screen wall with occasional transparent panels was installed, and the elevator was rebuilt. The new installation was opened to tourists on July 18th, after years of limited access, and is proving to be very popular.

John McK. Camp II
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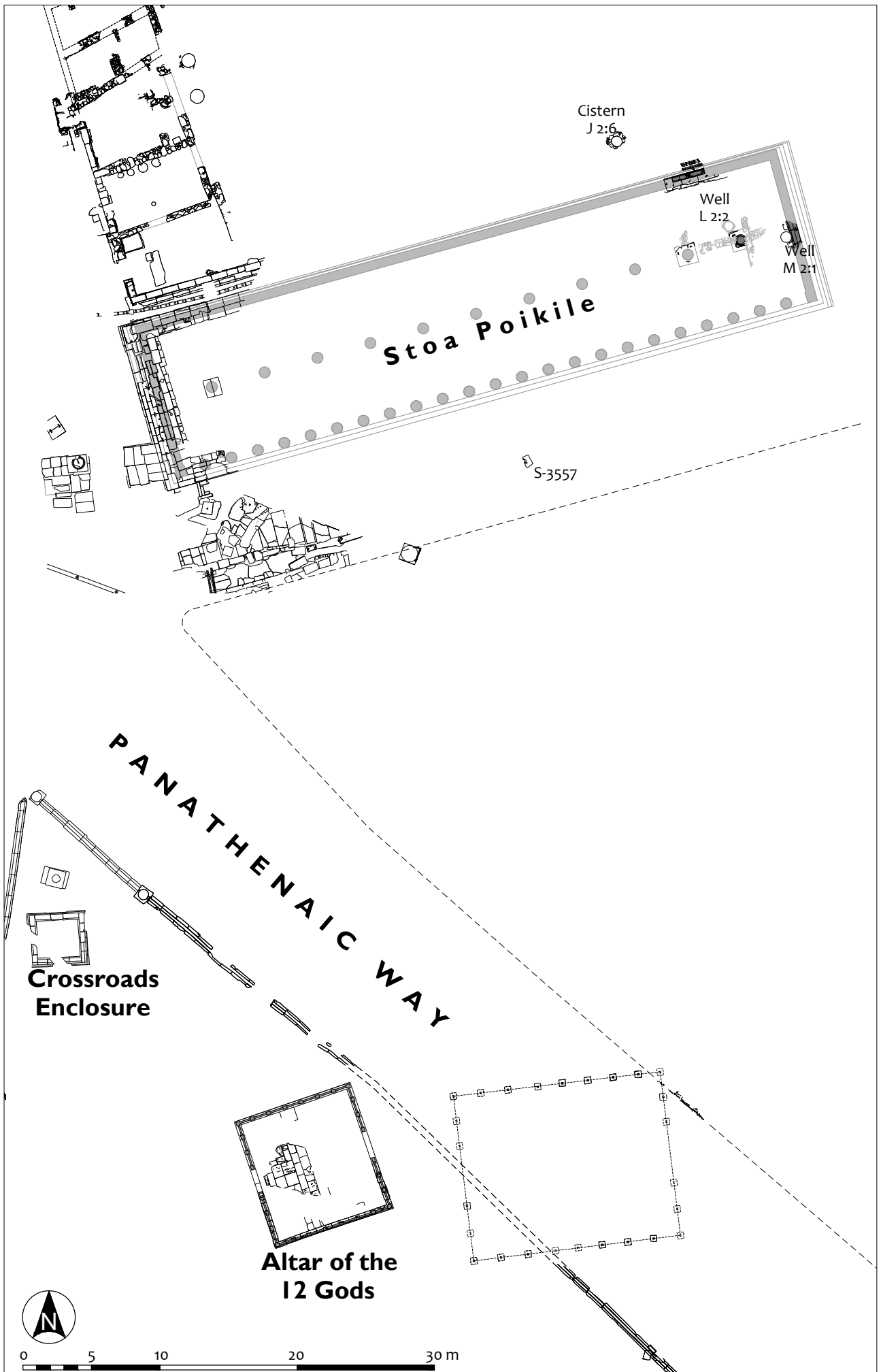


Fig.1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

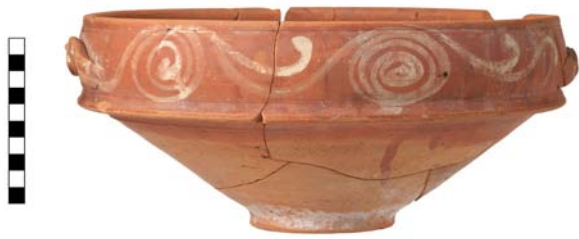


Fig. 7 a.



Fig. 7 b.



Fig. 8 a.



Fig. 8 b.



Fig. 8 c.



Fig. 8 d.



Fig. 8 e.



Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11 a. Approximately life size.

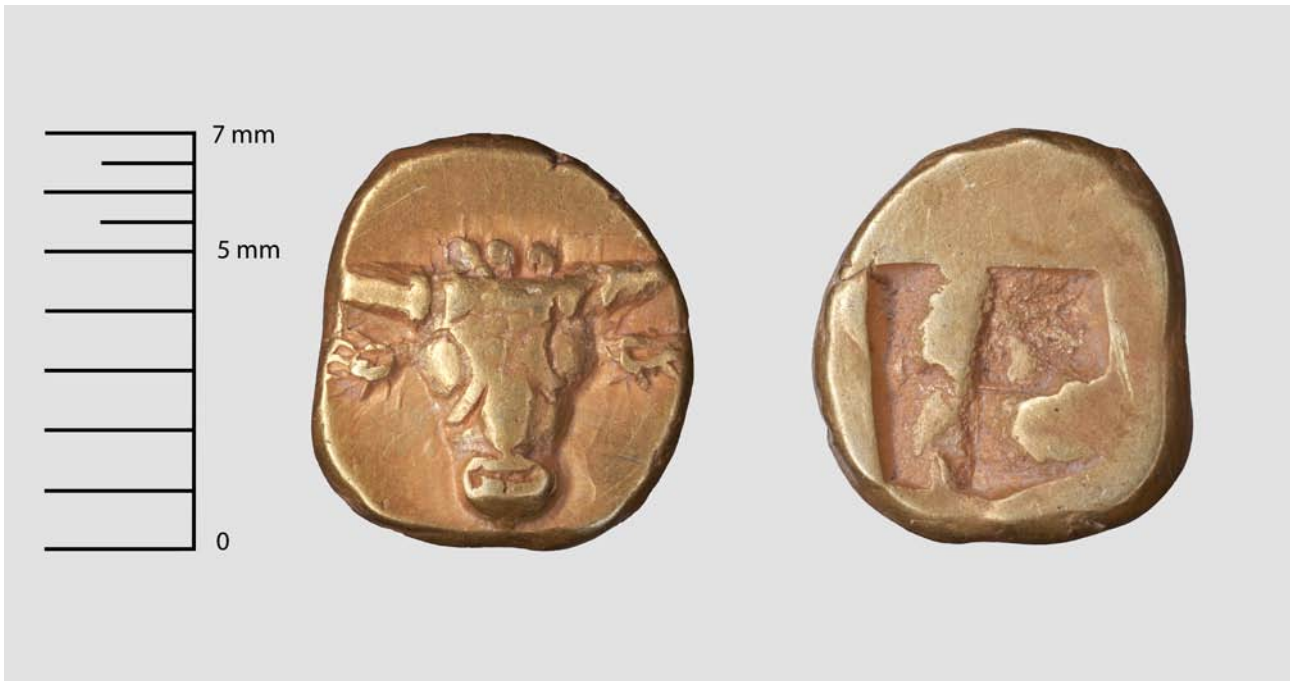


Fig. 11 b.



Fig. 12.



Fig. 13 a.



Fig. 13 b.