

Agora Excavations  
1997 season  
Preliminary Report

Excavations were carried out in the Athenian Agora from June 10 to August 1, 1997, with a crew of forty students representing 26 colleges and universities. The preliminary results presented here are the product of their hard work and enthusiastic participation (*Fig. 1*). Primary funding was provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, with supplementary support from Randolph-Macon College and the members of the Panathenaic Society. As always, the excavations produced material covering a wide chronological span, from the earliest Iron Age to the beginnings of the Hellenistic period. The early material was particularly abundant, from the period when Athens was taking form as a *polis* or city-state. Excavations were carried out in two separate areas: under the Middle Stoa in the Agora square and just north of the northwest entrance to the Agora.

In the central area, east of the southern boundary stone, we continued to explore the levels deep under the Middle Stoa. The earliest deposits directly over bedrock filled a shallow gully and supported a road which runs northeastward into the area of the later Agora square. Pottery in this layer, though fragmentary, included some fine pieces of early black-figured ware (*Figs. 2, 3*). The material comes down to the middle years of the 6th century and the apparently deliberate grading of the area may represent the earliest laying-out of the public square at that time. In one pocket in the bedrock we recovered several pieces of pottery of the very latest 8th century BC which presumably came from a disturbed *grave*. Most impressive is the large jar used for the actual burial, standing three feet high, decorated with stripes on the body and Geometric motifs on the neck (*Fig. 4*). Also to be dated to the eighth century was a shallow *well*, only 1.30 m. deep as preserved. Pairs of hand-holes cut in the sides suggest that more ambitious plans for a deeper well were abandoned. Several two-handled cups (*skyphoi*) and a small bowl made in imitation of a basket (*Fig. 5*) were thrown in as the shaft was filled up, and indicate that the abortive well dates to the 2nd half of the 8th century BC.

In the northwest area (*Fig. 7*) we continued to scrape bedrock deep within the foundations of the Augustan temple of Aphrodite. Here we discovered a second *burial*, immediately south of the one cleared last season. It was a simple stone-lined pit cut into the ground, containing the remains of a teenage girl. Unlike her neighbor, she was buried with some modest grave goods, a bronze pin, a bronze ring, and two small jugs (*Fig. 6*). These allow us to date the grave to the years around 1050 BC, and thus represent the earliest evidence we have for human use of this area north of the Eridanos river. Our earliest evidence for actual habitation north of the river was also encountered this year, in the form of a *well* dating to the years around 800 BC. It was cut through sterile soil and bedrock to a depth of 7.00 m. Pottery from the period-of-use included banded water jars, glazed pitchers decorated with bands of geometric designs, and coarse ware jugs (*Fig. 8*).

The next major phase recovered in this season's work was the late archaic period, which was found at a relatively high level behind the Classical commercial building. Here we dug more of a thin layer of crushed bedrock fill which was partially excavated last season and found to be full of *ostraka* cast against Themistokles and Xanthippos. Another 50 or so were found this year, bringing the total up to over a hundred and twenty pieces, making it one of the largest such deposits from the Agora. Almost certainly these represent castoffs from the ostracism of 485/4 BC, when Xanthippos was exiled and Themistokles became leader of the popular party. Just to the east was found a shallow pit, into which an assortment of fragmentary black-glazed fragments had been discarded. The pit is only 0.75 m. deep and 0.80 m. in diameter and its function is uncertain. Nearby we encountered two cobbled surfaces, very hard-packed and showing signs of foot traffic. Only a small area was exposed this season, so it is not yet clear whether we are dealing with a road or some sort of courtyard open to the sky in use in the years around the time of the Persian invasion of 480/479 BC.

We continued to excavate also within the *Classical commercial building*, concentrating on the two southernmost rooms (*Fig. 11*). Here, we stripped off successive floors: level, smooth, surfaces of hard-packed clay. Several dated to the early Hellenistic period. From one of them we recovered an impression taken in clay from a piece of metalwork with relief decoration (*Fig. 9*). The original showed a

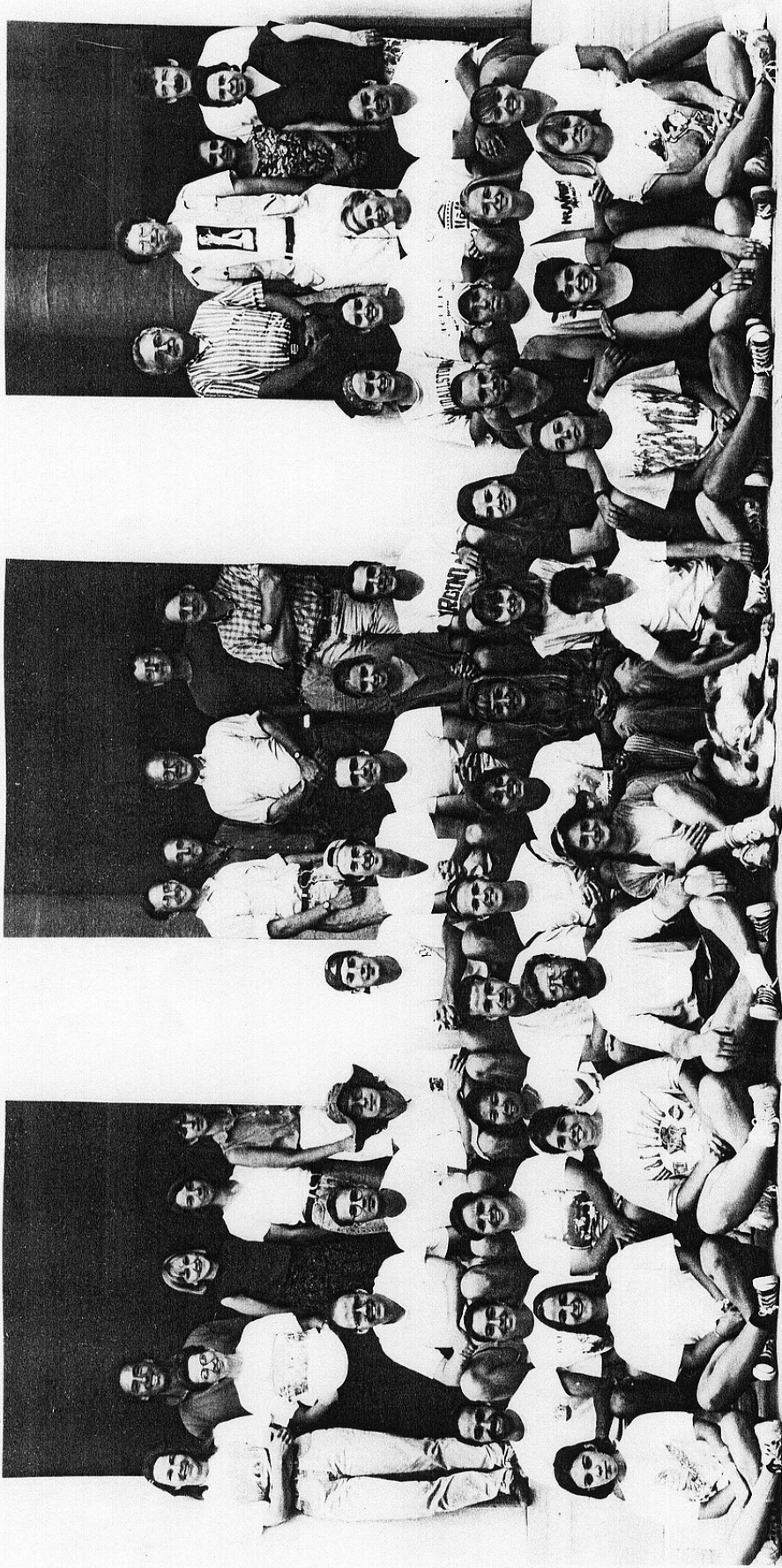
draped lady moving to her left, looking back to her right, with her right arm held up and bent, holding more drapery. A wreath of sketchy, elongated leaves runs across the area above her head, just below the rim of the piece. The top of the impression suggests it was taken from an open vessel, with a slightly outturned rim, some 0.18 m. in diameter. The right side, beyond the upraised arm, is also a finished surface, indicating that impressions were made of individual figures. This piece reinforces our notion that the Classical commercial building was the site of the manufacture and sale of high-quality miniature works of art. From a lower floor in Room 2 we also have another 'pyre', as they are called, collections of small pots and areas of burning which seem to reflect some rite not known from any literary source (*Fig. 10*). The new one is among the earliest known, dating to the very early 4th century BC, and is the sixth 'pyre' to be recovered from the building. The architecture of the building itself is coming into sharper focus as a result of the work this summer. The exterior south wall is carefully built of large ashlar blocks of poros limestone. The interior walls are of hard Acropolis limestone, set in a polygonal style with 'ladders' of smaller stones filling the interstices (*Fig. 12*). This wall style is common in Attica in the 5th century BC, and pottery from the lowest floors suggests that the building should be dated to the middle years of the century. There are slight differences in the construction of the various walls and it is not yet clear if there is any chronological distinction to be made in these stylistic differences.

The other major development of the summer concerns future work in the area (*Fig. 13*). Demolition of a recently-acquired property was begun, our first expansion into new territory since 1992. The new plot, just over 250 square meters in area, will occupy our efforts for the next several years. It should cover part of a late Roman bath, the early northern road, and the north end of the Classical commercial building. It will also allow us to connect the antiquities which were uncovered in rescue excavations in the adjacent lot to the west in 1960. While it is under excavation, we will proceed with negotiations to acquire the seven remaining properties which overlie the rest of the Stoa Poikile, birthplace of Stoic philosophy and presumably the last unexcavated public building to line the Agora square.

August 10, 1997

John McK. Camp II  
Director, Agora Excavations



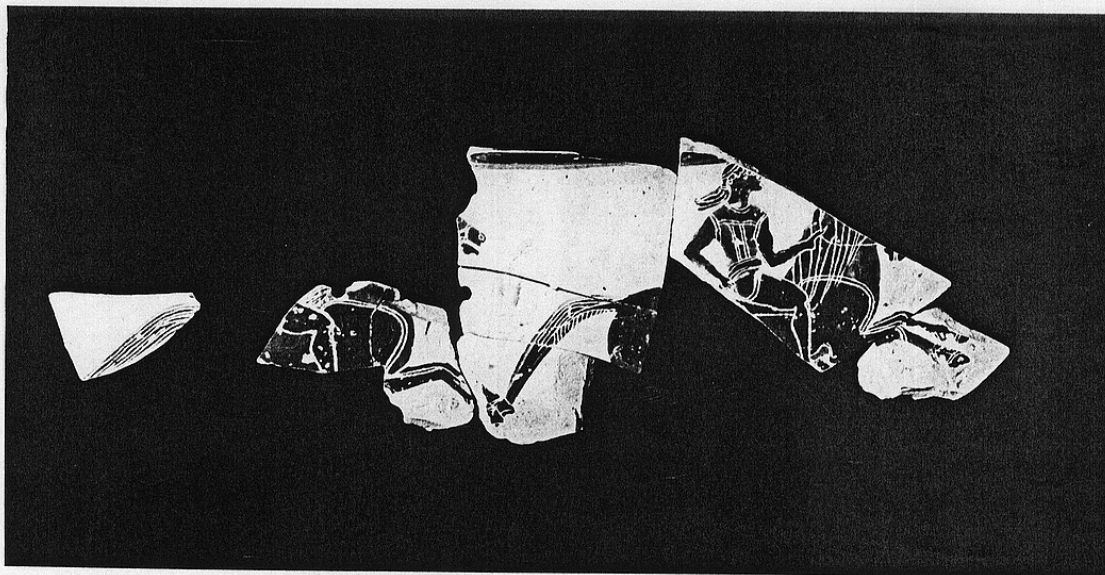


AGORA EXCAVATIONS - STAFF PHOTO 1997

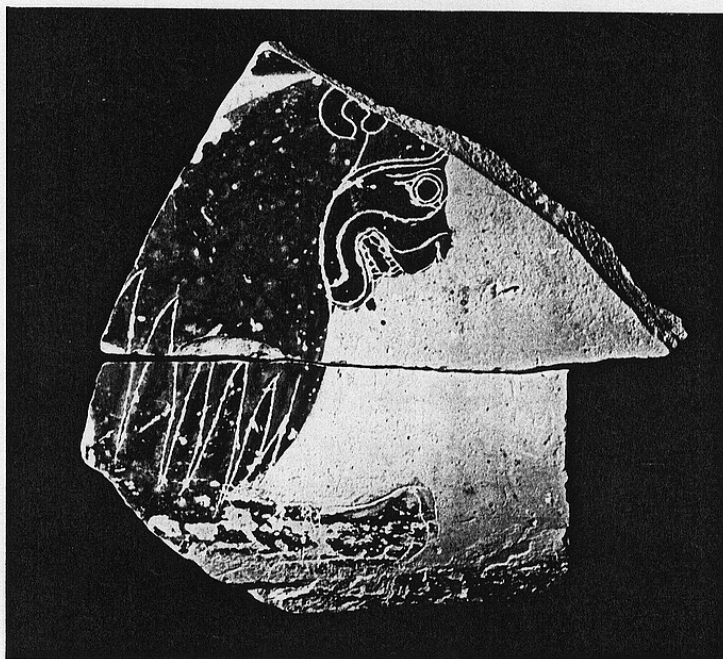
Top Row : L to R, Alice Paterakis, Andrew Viduka, Sylvie Dumont, Karen Stamm, Kathleen Lynch, Lisa Kelman, Tom Milbank,  
 Dave Scahill, John Camp, Kevin Daly, Geoffrey Schmalz, Michael Djordjevitich, Richard Anderson, Maria Stamatatou, Craig  
 Mauzy, Koula Moustaka.  
 2nd Row : Ken Tuite, Petro Pesonen, Ian Bunker, Ryan Feters, Rob Huitt, Brandon Worrell, Erin Black, Mark Alonge, Marcie Handler,  
 Cindy Wood, Tanya Kane, Elizabeth Janis.  
 3rd Row : Travis Quay, Sarah Ferrario, Eeva-Marie Viitanen, Mely Brittingham, Stephen Sarles, T.J. Silverman, Shrita Gajendragadkar,  
 Cigdem Özbek, Jennifer Martin, Dawn Smith, Mike Laughy, Chris White, Ande Bedford, Mandy Palik.  
 Bottom Row : L to R: Jennifer Paterakis, Katharine Parker, Brandy Robertson, Sergei Iliachenko, Rachel Levine, dog, Anne McCabe,  
 Maggie Kondash, Amy Kakissis, Susan Lupack.



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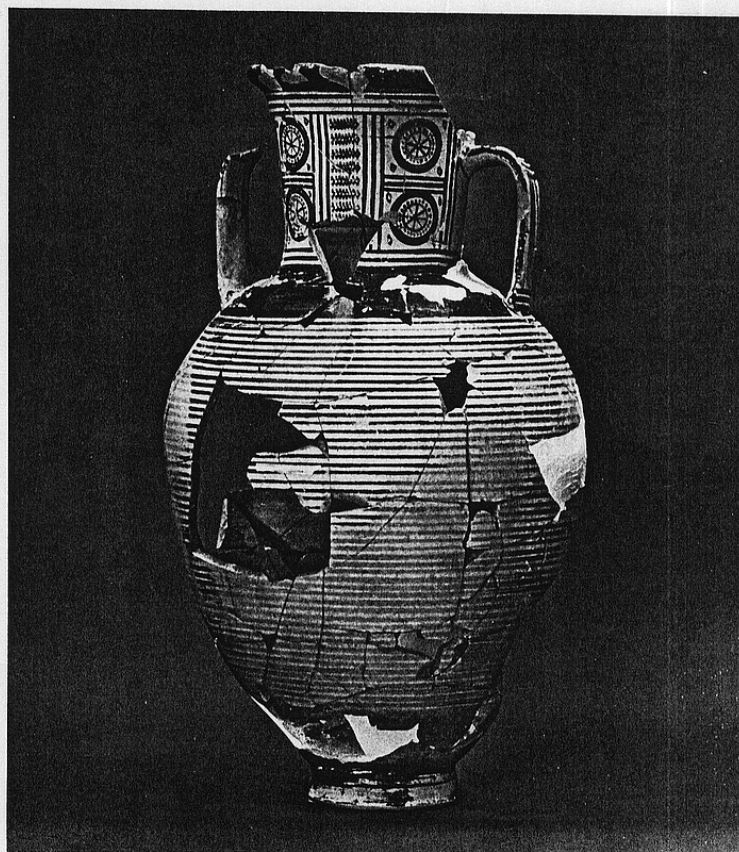


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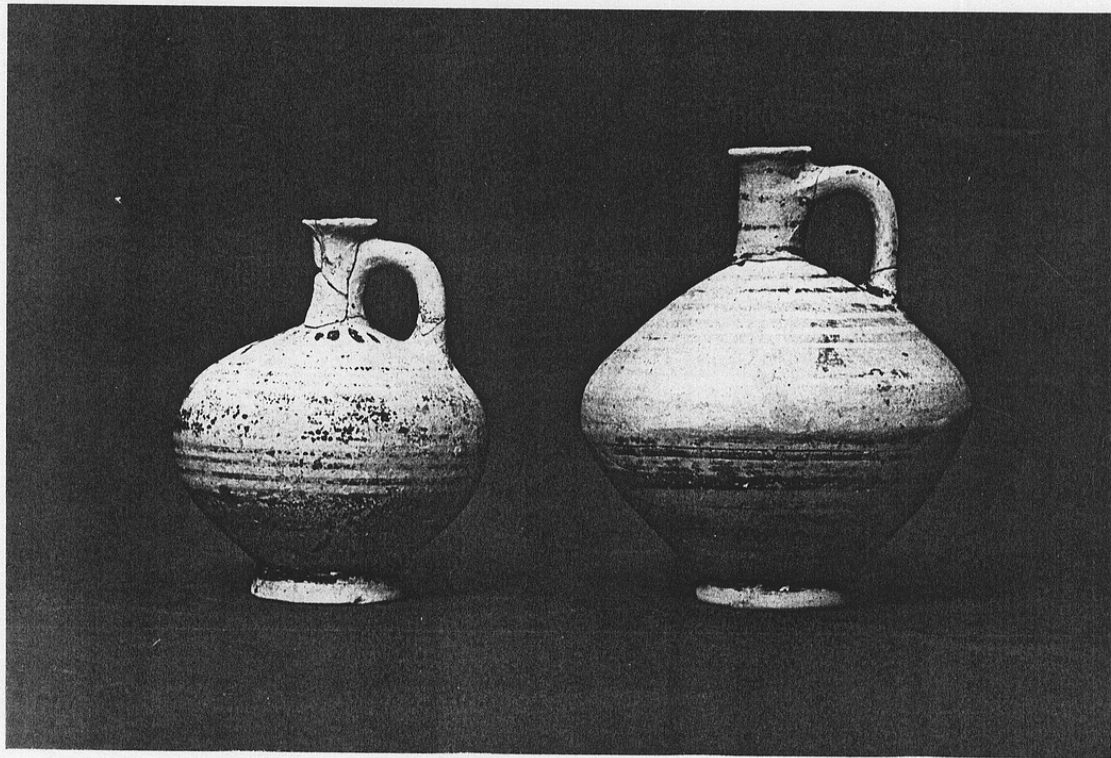
2. and 3.  
Fragments from a large  
black-figured vase found  
in the packing for the  
early road.  
First half 6th B.C.

4. Burial urn from a disturbed  
grave over bedrock, deep under  
the Middle Stoa. Ca. 700 B.C.



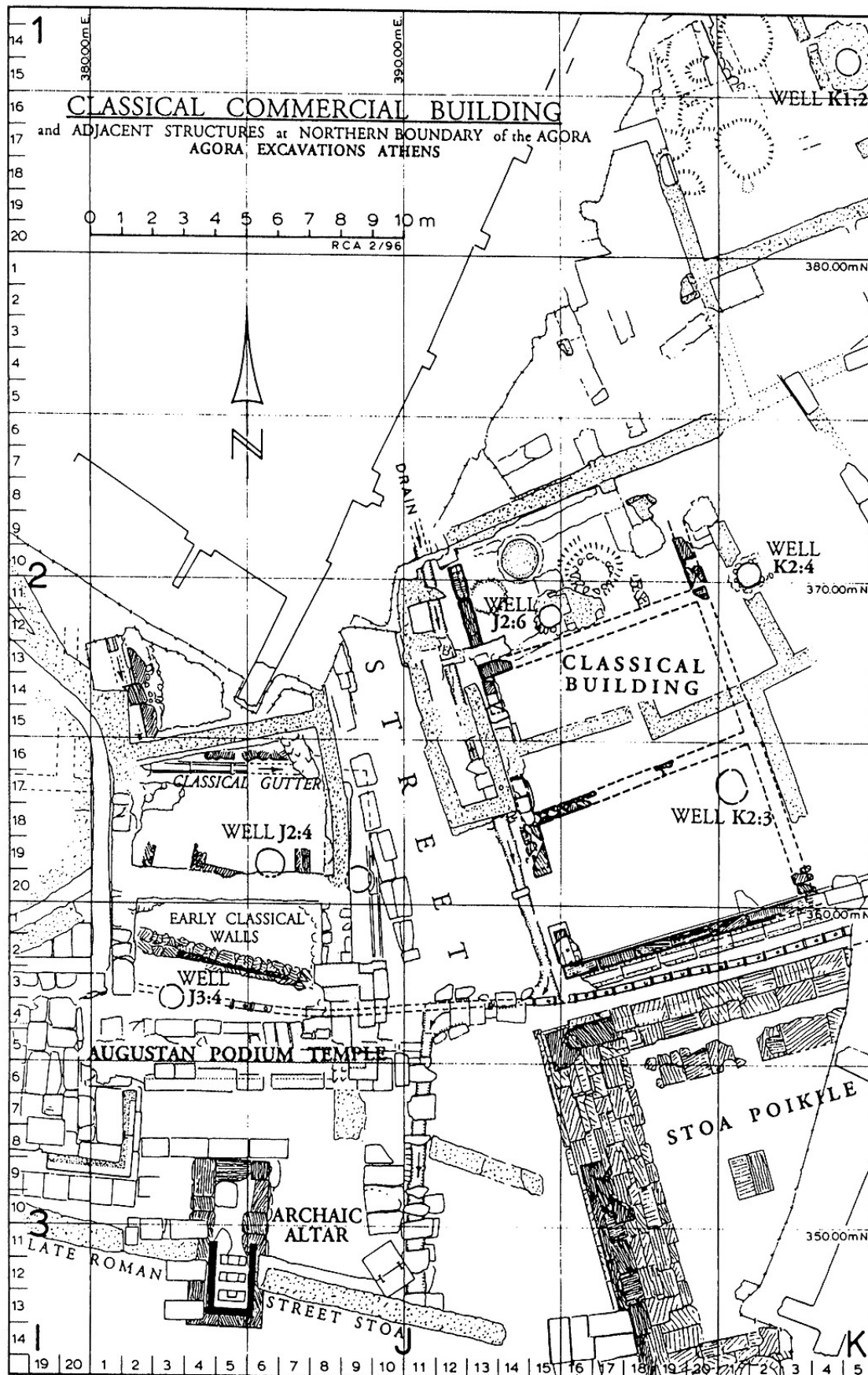


5. Vase in form of a basket, from the abandoned well.  
Ca. 700 B.C.



6. Grave goods, from the early burial under the Aphrodite  
temple. Sub-mycenaean; ca. 1050 B.C.



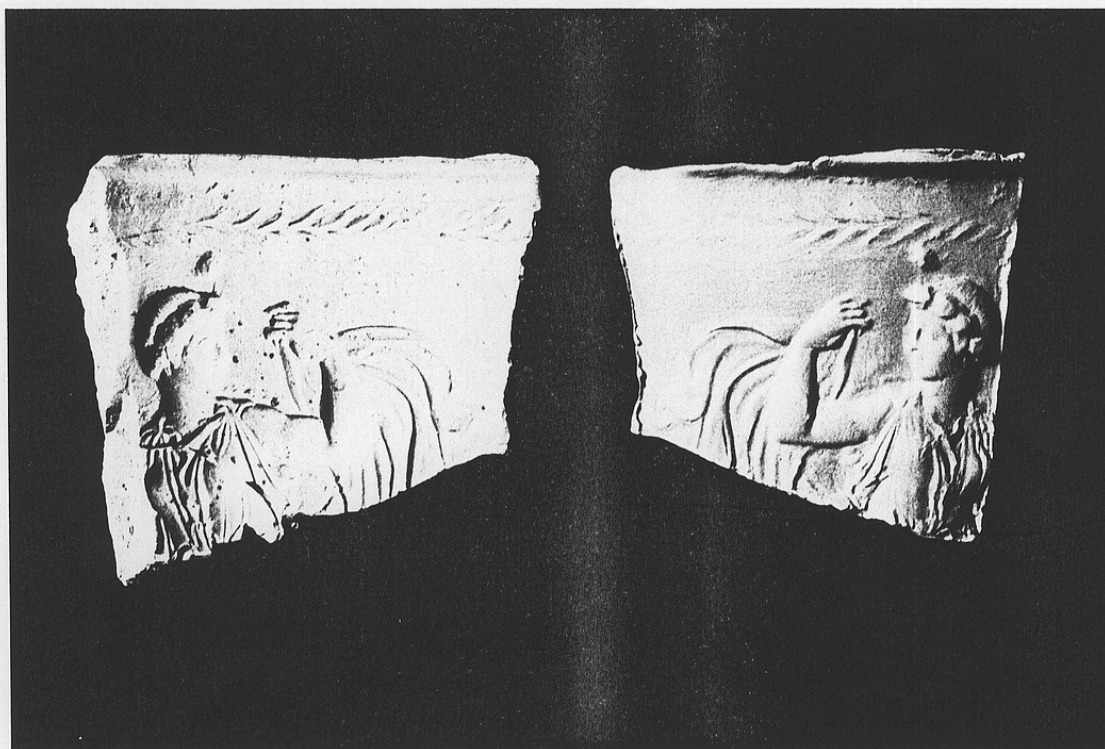


7. Northwest area of excavation.





8. Water jars from the Middle Geometric well.  
Ca. 800 B.C.



9. Terracotta impression (left) taken from a metal vessel  
(5th/4th B.C.). From Room 2 of the commercial  
building.



10. Pots from "pyre" in Room 2. Dated ca.400 B.C. this is the earliest of 40 such deposits known from the Agora.

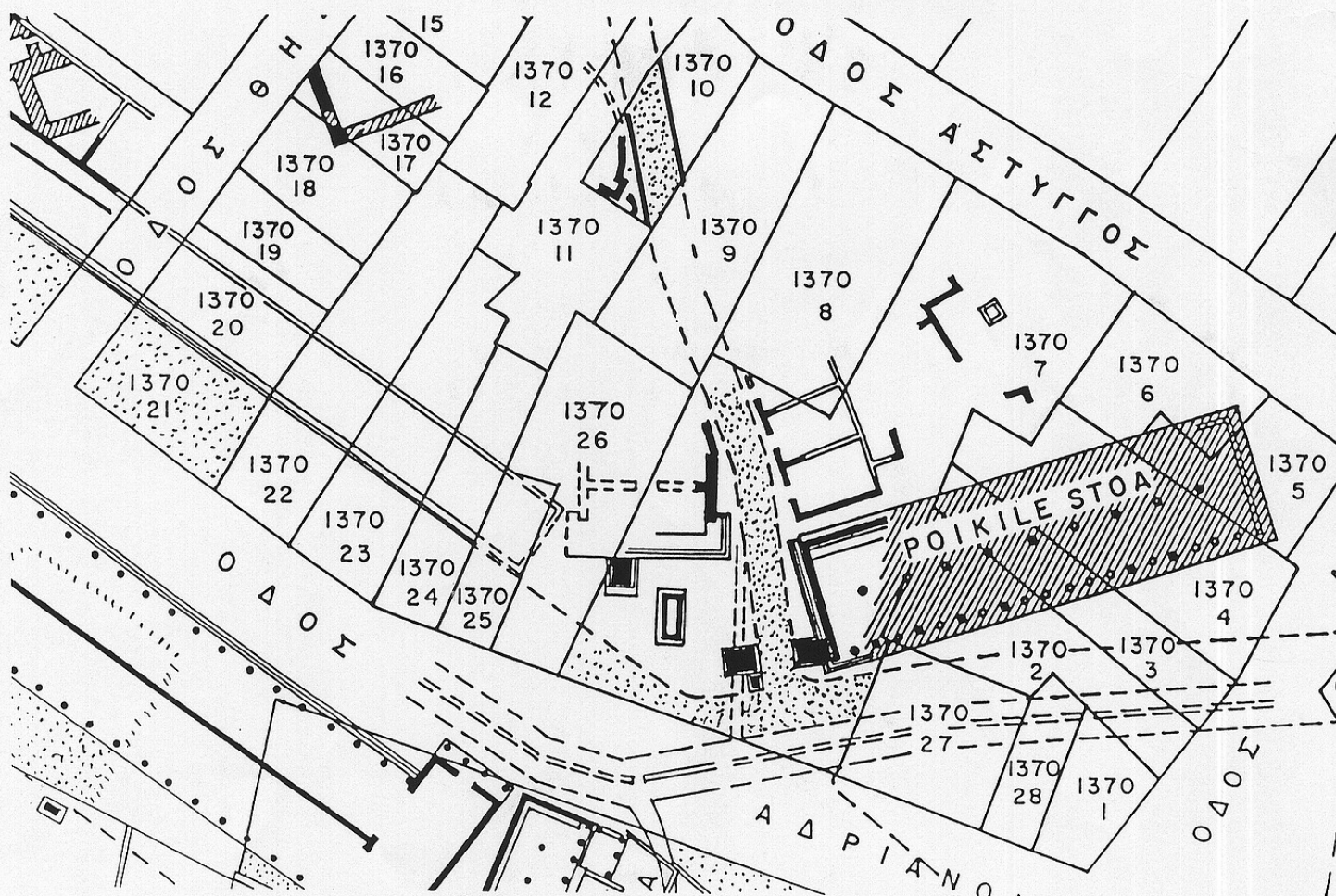


11. Room 2 of the Classical commercial building with Late Roman walls (6th A.D.) on top.  
X: area of ostraka finds.





12.  
Crosswall between Rooms  
1 + 2 of commercial building,  
with 'ladder' work-5th c. B.C.  
Late Roman wall (6th A.D.)  
behind, Byzantine well  
(11th A.D.) right foreground.



13. Northern area, lot 1370/8 under excavation, lot 1370/9 under demolition 1997;  
hatched red: future work.