

Agora Excavations 2000

Preliminary Summary

Excavations were carried out for 8 weeks in the summer of 2000, from June 5 to July 28, with a team of some 55 people made up of student volunteers, supervisors, staff, and workmen. This report is a very preliminary account of the results of their hard work and combined efforts. Excavations were carried out in three sections, two to the northwest and one to the southeast of the Agora square.

Section BZ (Fig. 1 and Plan)

Excavation here was supervised by Mark Alonge, Kevin Daly, Michael Laughy, and Anne McCabe. In this section, we continued to expose the remains of the Byzantine settlement of the 11th century AD encountered immediately under the debris of the modern building demolished in the summer of 1997. The plans and stratigraphy of the houses were greatly clarified this season, with three distinct floor levels indicating successive refurbishments. Several pithoi were more fully exposed, one with its mouth raised to function with a later floor. A tile-lined well was also uncovered and partially excavated and should indicate the position of the courtyard of one of the houses.

The picture of this medieval neighborhood gathered in earlier years was enhanced this season: close-packed houses with no open spaces between them, provisions for considerable subterranean storage, and a hoard of bronze coins. The interpretation of this evidence is less clear. Are these troubled times and do we have people crowded together in the city for security, desperately hoarding supplies and coins? Or are times good, and do the many new houses reflect a rising population, with ample agricultural goods needing storage, and extra money hidden away for safe-keeping? The present archaeological evidence allows either interpretation. The construction of the Church of the Holy Apostles to the south and the Asomaton to the northwest perhaps favors the latter, happier view of Athens in the 11th century.

Digging along the robbed-out Byzantine street wall, we encountered a substantial collection of bronze coins in a relatively small area. In all, some 130 coins were recovered. They are mostly illegible, but a very few are late Roman (4th AD?) in date, suggesting we have here the remains of a hoard, scattered as a result of later building operations. Alaric's invasion in 396 AD or possibly that of the Vandals in the 470s may well have been the occasion for the original deposition of the hoard.

Section BE

Excavation was supervised by Dave Scahill. Here we continued to explore early levels in and around the Classical shop building (**Plan**). Further cleaning of the two Mycenaean tombs was carried out. Prof. Maria Liston began a preliminary analysis of the bones recovered in the past two years and can report that one grave (K 2: 5) held the remains of at least 7 individuals (4 adults, 3 kids), including an elderly man who had survived a broken collarbone and several broken ribs. The other (J/K 2: 2) had at least two adult males, one adult female, and a child).

The last of the fill containing ostraka was also cleared, and another dozen or so were found (Fig. 3), raising the total to over 150 pieces, making this the third largest deposit of ostraka found in the Agora. As with the others from this group, all the new ostraka were cast against either

Themistokles or Xanthippos. Prof. James Sickinger of FSU will be in Athens in early August to begin research for publication of the deposit.

After a major operation by Craig Mauzy to stabilize the collapsing shaft, we were able this year to complete the excavation of the 5th century well begun last season. The well was 1.20 m. in diameter and some 5.50 m. deep. A large pithos mouth had been reused as the well-head, fell into the shaft, and was found at a depth of about 4.50 meters. The upper dumped fill excavated this year included a handsome red-figured pelike, with the draped figure of a woman on one side and a draped youth on the other (Fig. 4). Unusual pieces included two late black-figured choes, one with Dionysos standing between two rams, the other with a draped woman carrying a tray being followed by a man blowing into a trumpet, and an intact cylindrical vessel of lead. An assortment of black-glazed salt-cellars, askoi, and lamps was also recovered, dating largely to the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the 5th century BC. The well may have gone out of use as a result of the earthquake of 426 BC (Thuc. 3.87.4 and 3.89), believed to be the cause of similarly dated deposits found behind the Royal Stoa (Rotroff and Oakley, *Hesperia Supplement* 25). The lowest fill represented period-of-use and was composed mostly of thin-walled water jars of coarse micaceous clay. Also recovered were numerous burnishing stones, suggesting some light industry in the area; the relationship of the well to the adjacent shop building has yet to be determined.

Section EA

Excavation was supervised by Laura Gawlinski. Here in the area of the Eleusinion, we cleared bedrock in several trenches to determine where it would be safe to found wooden walkways planned by our Greek colleagues for the presentation of the Agora park. For the most part the bedrock lies high in this area and we had only to scrape a few centimeters of fill, some Byzantine, some Roman, and some late Hellenistic. In one of the levels near the post-Herulian wall we recovered the upper right corner of an inscribed stele of Hymettian marble (Fig. 2). Some 22 lines of text survive, preserving about half of each line, which originally contained some 33 letters. The letter forms and formulae suggest a date somewhere in the 3rd century BC, and a preliminary reading of the text suggests it concerns Athenian relations with the city of Kydonia in Crete.

John McK. Camp II
July 2000



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



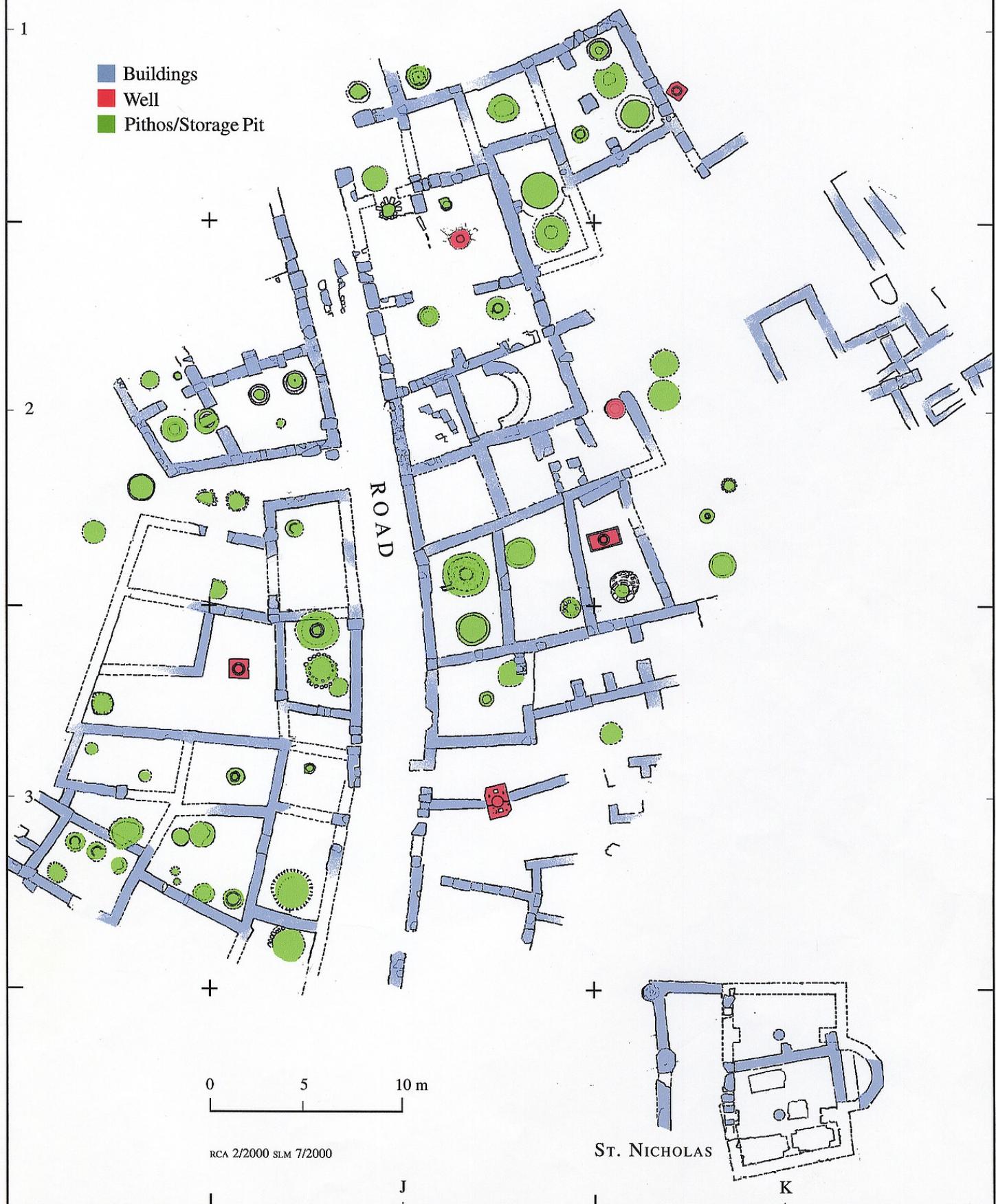
Fig. 3

Fig. 4



AGORA EXCAVATIONS ATHENS

SECTIONS BE BZ BH
BYZANTINE SETTLEMENT: 11TH CENTURY AD



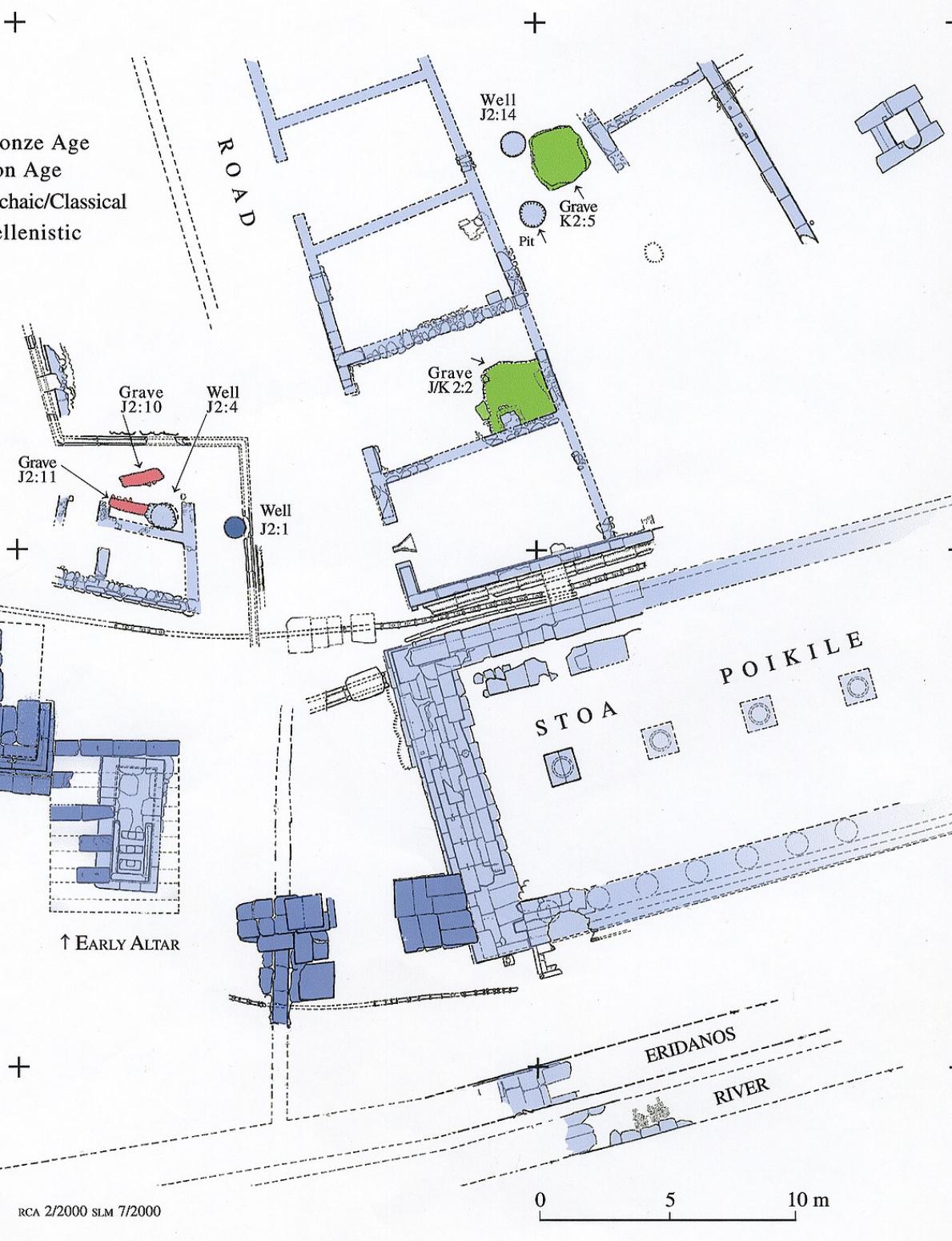
PD 2792

AGORA EXCAVATIONS ATHENS

SECTIONS BE BZ BH

MYCENAEAN/CLASSICAL GREEK/HELLENISTIC PHASES

- Bronze Age
- Iron Age
- Archaic/Classical
- Hellenistic



PD 2790

AGORA EXCAVATIONS ATHENS

SECTIONS BE BZ BH

ROMAN PHASES: 1ST-6TH CENTURIES AD

0 5 10 m

1ST/2ND Centuries AD
4TH/6TH Centuries AD

