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ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2014–2015

2014–2015: a view from Greece

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In a year when financial crisis and EU turmoil have gripped Greece and dominated international press coverage, one might be forgiven for assuming that there would be slow progress in archaeological research and heritage management. It has certainly been a tumultuous year, and heartfelt thanks are due to colleagues, especially those in the Archaeological Service, who have gone the extra mile to deliver their own work and to help others in the face of mounting pressures. In 2014 alone, the Central Archaeological Council dealt with 1,477 cases in 42 sittings, and its 2015 target is set to exceed this. Yet as I take stock of what has been achieved in publication, fieldwork, study and public communication, I am struck by the wealth of new information available and in many forms. Individual finds, continuing research programmes and a number of landmark conferences and exhibitions have contributed to real and significant advances in knowledge. There is much to report, and even more to see on the ground for readers inspired (as we hope) to spend time in Greece.

When *Archaeology in Greece* went to press last September, the Greek and international press was seized with Amphipolis fever. Twelve months on, populist reaction to the promise of a major Macedonian élite tomb has subsided. Debates about the inhabitants of the tomb, its date and significance will surely continue, but the weight of academic opinion is now swinging towards the view that at least a major remodelling (if not the initial construction) postdates the Roman conquest of Macedon (168 BC). Olga Palagia sets out below the sculptural case for this date, which of course precludes a connection with the Macedonian Temenid royal family. Excavation was halted for economic reasons early in 2015. Study of the human bones from the first phase of excavation indicates the burial of five individuals, but there are surely more to be found (not least given the lack of rich grave goods so far). Future work in the mound can now be guided by the results of a geophysical survey. Meanwhile, attention has turned to the conservation and stabilization of the site (both the mound itself and conditions within it) – major and expensive work but essential not least to avoid unprotected exposure to a second winter. Study of the various categories of find continues, and we await with interest full details and publication of this material.

Site conservation and display have also been a focus of activity in many other parts of Greece. *Archaeology in Greece Online* has for a number of years reported on the large programme of conservation and restoration at Nikopolis, which has greatly enhanced our knowledge of the major monuments of the Roman city. This year, work on the odeion has been completed, providing new information on many aspects of one of the best preserved monuments in the city, from the time of its construction under Augustus and its remodelling at the end of the second or early third century AD. With a seating capacity of *ca*. 1,000, the building was not especially large, but it was located right beside the agora, and substantial investment was made in its decoration (noting for example the polychrome marble facing of the orchestra and the rich marble decoration of the upper storey, including a geison with Corinthian capitals). A further long-running programme of conservation at the Monastery of Daphni, begun in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake which caused serious damage to the structure and its mosaics, was completed in August 2015.



1. Alikyrna. © Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs.

Major public works (in many cases now resumed after delays imposed by the financial crisis) continue to bring important sites to light. The discovery of the city and cemeteries of Alikyrna in Aetoloakarnania during the construction of the Ionia Odos is such a case (**Fig. 1**). Important as these

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2. Lake Karla, Tsingenina: lifting of Middle Helladic structures. © Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs.

discoveries are, they often demand difficult decisions about the fate of the antiquities concerned. We have reported in previous years on the fruits of a series of rescue excavations conducted for the restoration of Lake Karla in Thessaly, which include a rich diversity of settlement remains dating from prehistoric to Hellenistic times. At Tsingenina, finds include a group of seven Middle Helladic buildings (**ID4013**, **ID5092**): five of them have now been reburied, but the two largest (a house and a storage facility), together with a peribolos enclosing an area of *ca*. 280 m^2, have been lifted and removed to a location where they will be preserved and visitable as part of an extensive new environmental and archaeological park (**Fig. 2**).

New directions in museology have drawn our attention in recent years. The new Acropolis Museum is one of the most striking (and popular) visitor attractions in Athens. In 2015 it celebrated its sixth anniversary (and some eight million visitors) with a temporary exhibition entitled *Samothrace. The Mysteries of the Great Gods* and a day conference in June on recent archaeological research on Samothrace. The exhibition includes finds from the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, the cemetery attached to the settlement and the Minoan settlement at Mikro Vouni, which were transferred from the Samothrace Museum while it is closed for major renovation. This is the first time that this material has left the island. Quite apart from the intrinsic interest of the exhibition, the decision to take advantage of a period of museum closure to bring to the capital important materials from a remote area is a welcome innovation which, one hopes, will serve as a model for the future.

The success of the new museum is just one part of a larger plan for the museum complex. The old museum on the top of the Acropolis is itself of historical significance. First built in 1874 by the architect Panagis Kalkos (one of the first Greek architects to work in the modern state) and then progressively altered until it reached its current form in 1964, it is perhaps surprising to find that it has not been listed as a historical monument, although there is widespread recognition of its significance and goodwill to preserve it. It will soon gain a new lease of life as a museum focused on the history of conservation and restoration on the Acropolis, as a complement to the main museum. The storerooms still hold a quantity of large and immovable epigraphical and architectural finds; these will be visible to the public, who will also be able to visit conservation facilities and see marble workers in action in the workshops of the Acropolis restoration team. The plan is exciting, and, especially for those of us who have been privileged to know members of the restoration team 'family' for many years, a fitting tribute to their extraordinary achievements.

The third part of the new plan, approved by the Central Archaeological Council in 2014 but awaiting final funding, is the display *in situ* of finds from the Makryianni plot excavated in preparation for the construction of the new museum. As is clear from our previous reports, both in print and online, the wealth of information spanning prehistory to early modernity (*ca*. 3,000 BC to AD 1200) in an area of some 4km^2 affords a unique opportunity to gain a real sense of a city neighbourhood. The excavated area is already exposed to view, and the plan is now to display some 1,400 artefacts and architectural members in what will effectively become a new wing of the museum. Via pathways laid through the site and structured exhibits on key themes and on the activities practised in particular areas, the visitor will, in the words of museum Director Dimitris Pandermalis, experience a touch of the daily life of the city to contrast with the official Athens of the museum.

Athens and Attica have been the subjects of a number of exhibitions and conferences this year, with Ottoman Athens a particular focus. Videocasts of a conference at the American School of Classical Studies on *The Topography of Ottoman Athens: Archaeology and Travel*, which accompanied an exhibition in the Gennadius Library, can be found in the online digital library of the ASCSA (http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.

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3. Athens: Art Gallery of the City of Athens, Plateia Koumoundourou. © Municipality of Athens.

php/digital-library/lecture-archive). The exhibition itself formed part of a wider co-initiative with the Benaki Museum and the Museum of the City of Athens to examine the city in the period 1458–1833. This coincides with a number of milestones in the histories of venerable Athenian institutions. The 180th anniversary of the adoption of Athens as capital of the Greek state was celebrated in an exhibition in the Art Gallery of the City of Athens which in 2014 itself celebrated its centenary. Over 100 images of the city and its buildings by 87 Greek and foreign artists were shown in an initiative which is doubly welcome because it has breathed new life into the gallery's fine Neoclassical building in Plateia Koumoundourou (also the work of Panagis Kalkos) (**Fig. 3**), which had been closed since 2010. The latest exhibition, officially opened in September 2015, again marks an anniversary. *A Dream among Wonderful Ruins, a Walk in the Athens of the Travellers, 17th–19th Century* at the National Archaeological Museum runs through the lead up to the museum's 150th birthday on 3rd October 2016. Focused on the archaeological sites of Athens, it combines a range of art works and books from the collections of the Hellenic Parliament, the General Archive of the State and the Museum of the City of Athens with the National Museum's own holdings. These formal events have been accompanied by a diverse range of lectures and guided walks that have fostered a new awareness of the city's history. It is greatly to be hoped that plans to open the oldest standing house in Athens, the 16th-century mansion of the Benizelos-Palaiologos family, as a museum soon come to fruition.

Indeed, 2014–2015 has seen much of interest for those concerned with the later Medieval and Early Modern material culture of Greek lands. Among a series of events to mark the 400th anniversary of the death of El Greco, I single out the exhibition *Domenikos Theotokopoulos before El Greco* at the Byzantine and Christian Museum, which focused on the social and cultural world of the Crete in which Theotokopoulos grew up. Thematic displays featured an innovative combination of art works, manuscripts and textiles with archaeological materials from rescue excavations across Crete which richly illustrated the material culture of daily life. It is unfortunate that financial constraints prevented the publication of the catalogue before the exhibition closed in March 2015, but this will surely be an important work when it does appear.

Turning to antiquity, here too Athens and Attica have featured prominently. In April 2015, a conference and exhibition at the Numismatic Museum (*Mines, Metals and Money in Attica and the Ancient World*) shed new light especially on Athenian coinage and ancient metallurgy. Papers ranged over matters of technology (from extraction to coining), the monitoring of quality and standards, minting and extraction activity at Laurion (the programme can be found at http://www.mq.edu.au/research/centres_and_groups/acans/international_conference_on_metallurgy_mines_numismatics_and_archaeology/program/). A second major conference, organized by the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs, the University of Athens, the Museum of Cycladic Art and American School of Classical Studies on *Athens and Attica in Prehistory* was a landmark in our understanding of Attica in its wider regional context, with numerous presentations of large bodies of data and syntheses often building on the results of rescue excavation. The proceedings will be published, but in the meantime videocasts of the sessions can be found in the ASCSA digital library (http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/digital-library/lecture-archive). In the same library I also draw attention to recordings of papers given at the September 2015 meeting *ΟΞΥΔΕΡΚΕΙΝ at Korakou: A Centennial Celebration of C.W. Blegen's 1915–1916 Excavations*.

I have emphasized the way in which guided walks and other popular activities have fostered interest in the Ottoman city of Athens. In the same spirit, the 2015 Athens Festival included Katerina Evangelatos' excellent production of the *Rhesos*, attributed to Euripides, performed in the Lyceum of Aristotle. The

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audience were guided around the site to the accompaniment of extracts from Aristotle interspersed with the dramatic text – a memorable introduction to a site which is not yet fully open to the public. Readers may not be aware that every use of an ancient site for a performance in the numerous summer festivals that take place across Greece is carefully considered by the Central Archaeological Council, and that permission is not always granted. The imaginative use of the Lyceum for one of the most talked-of performances of the past summer is thus most welcome.

Other exhibitions and conferences have focused on specific categories of object (such as a workshop on *Terracotta Sculpture: New Finds and New Studies* at the British School at Athens, co-organized with the Aristotle University, Thessaloniki), on specific themes in ancient culture (as the highly successful exhibitions at the Museum of Cycladic Art, *HYGEIA. Health, Illness, Treatment from Homer to Galen* and *BEYOND. Death and Afterlife in Ancient Greece*) and on the art of particular places (the exhibition *Rhodes: A Greek Island at the Gateway to the East, 15th–5th Centuries BC*, originally shown in the Musée du Louvre, transferred to Rhodes Museum in July 2015). In addition, a number of long-awaited exhibits were added to the permanent exhibitions of museums around the country. Thus the Fisherman Fresco went on display in the Museum of Prehistoric Thera last June and early next year we will finally see on display in the Archaeological Museum of Thera the monumental (2.3m high) seventh-century marble kore from the cemetery of Sellada found some 15 years ago (**Fig. 4**). A kore of this monumental scale is rare: its exhibition was approved soon after its discovery, but having waited over a decade for funds to enable a large-scale redisplay of the museum galleries, the more practical decision was taken with the aid of the city council to renovate the one room needed for its display. Large projects may be hard to achieve in present circumstances, but smaller and highly effective practical steps like this can ensure that the most important discoveries are made available.



4. Thera, Sellada: Archaic kore. © Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs.

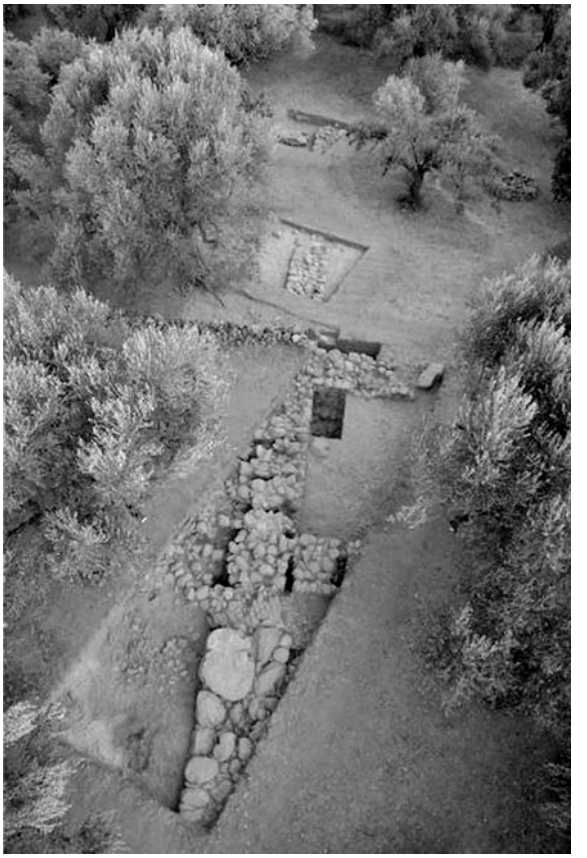
As I write, the British School's Fitch Laboratory and its counterpart NCSR Demokritos are preparing to host the 13th European Meeting on Ancient Ceramics, where we will welcome over 200 delegates from across the world to present science-based archaeological research into all aspects of ceramic technology. Not only is science-based research thriving in Greece, but the challenge of its public communication is firmly taken up. A rare exhibition to be focused on science in archaeology, *Ancient DNA. A Window on the Past and the Future* at the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, will remain on show for over a year (into August 2016) and act as a framework for the presentation of new analytical data from Neolithic Macedonia. The exhibition, which also includes Neolithic artefacts from the same sites as the skeletal material presented, examines the nature of a-DNA, sampling and analytical techniques, and the contribution of palaeogenetics when combined with anthropology and archaeology.

Much of my report this year has been taken up with discussion of conferences and exhibitions, reflecting a general trend towards evaluation, synthesis and public engagement. But new finds are also rich, and in some instances the cumulative results of ongoing projects are now striking. A notable case is the Myce-

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5. Agios Vasileios: bull's head rhyton. © ASA.



6. Agios Vasileios: Building Δ. © ASA.

naean palatial site at Agios Vasileios (Xirokambi) in Laconia (**Figs 5, 6**). Despite 2015 reports in the international press implying that this is a new discovery (with ensuing discussion in the blogosphere), the impressive results now available are the fruits of a series of annual campaigns directed since 2009 by Adamantia Vasilogamvrou for the Archaeological Society of Athens, reports of which have been posted on *AGOnline* (**ID1494**, **ID2322**, **ID2547**, **ID3407**, **ID4428**). The site is extensive, covering some 3.5ha, with remains of a cemetery and at least three buildings so far excavated. Cemetery evidence places its establishment at the transition from the Middle to Late Bronze Age; there was a major fire destruction in Late Helladic IIB–IIIA1, and the discovery of wallpaintings and Linear B tablets confirms the palatial status of the complex by this time.

As the 'Newsround' below shows, important new discoveries are not lacking. I have already noted the polis site of Alikyrna; other striking discoveries include the Final Neolithic double burial of an embracing man and women from Diros. With over 150 field investigations (excavations, surveys and geophysical surveys) taking place in 2015, new results now being reported will appear on *AGOnline* over the next months. I conclude with a brief taste of what is to come. At Didymoteicho (Plotinopolis), excavation of a Roman villa complex and a bath has been pursued by Matthaios Koutsoumanis since 2009 (**ID4600**). The latest reports concern the mosaics found in a bath complex of the second to sixth century AD (**Fig. 7**), which lies in a known area of rich buildings (a villa with mosaics was found just 20m away in the 1980s). At Pella, excavation in the area of the north stoa of the agora by the Aristotle University, Thessaloniki,



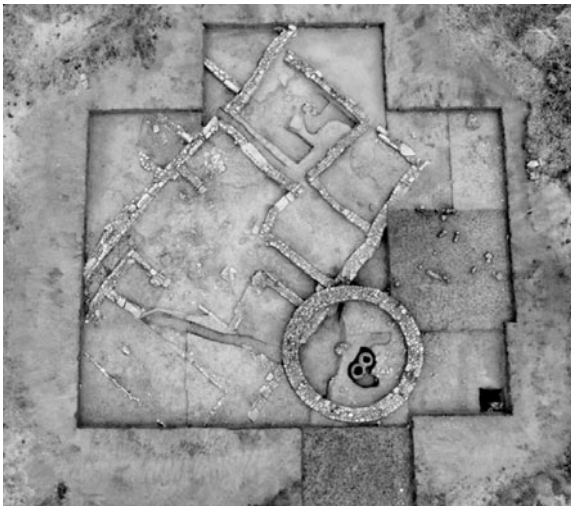
7. Didymoteicho (Plotinopolis): Roman bath with mosaic. © Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs.

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8. Pella: Hellenistic marble statue of Silenus. © Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Department of History and Archaeology.

under the direction of Ioannis Akamatis, revealed a life-size (1.75m tall) Hellenistic marble statue of Silenus (**Fig. 8**) – a further addition to the corpus of new finds here discussed by Olga Palagia. And on the Molyvoti peninsula, excavation by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Rhodope and the ASCSA (led by Nathan Arrington) at the putative site of the Thasian colony of Stryme has now fully exposed a fifth- to fourth-century BC house within a larger insula (abandoned in the last quarter of the fourth or early third century) (**Fig. 9**).



9. Ancient Stryme: Classical house. © ASCSA.

Readers who consult *AGOnline* will now find, in addition to the usual field reports from Greek and foreign missions, the contents of *ADelt* 61 (2006) and the 2014 *Ergon* of the Archaeological Society of Athens already added, and the recently arrived *ADelt* volumes 62 (2007), 63 (2008), 64 (2009) progressively being uploaded. As ever, I am grateful to the entire *AGOnline* team for their support: this year we have been joined at the BSA by Anthoulla Vassiliades as a project assistant. Particular thanks are due to Matthew Haysom (who, as BSA Knossos Curator, has been responsible for reporting on Crete), as he leaves the British School for a lectureship at the University of Newcastle. This is also my final edition of *Archaeology in Greece* as BSA Director. The past eight years have seen the creation of *Archaeology in Greece Online* in collaboration with the École française d'Athènes and the steady evolution of *Archaeology in Greece* to take advantage of the new opportunities thus created for more accessible synthesis and analysis. We are now able not merely to report new discoveries, but to comment more thoughtfully upon them and to contribute to the current climate of synthesis and analysis. I thank all with whom I have worked for making these developments possible – especially Dominique Mulliez for initiating *AGOnline*, Zosia Archibald for responding so creatively in developing *Archaeology in Greece* and Gina Coulthard for ensuring that we reach print each year – and I wish my successor, John Bennet, all good fortune.

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