ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2013–2014

Introduction & overview

Zosia Archibald | University of Liverpool | Z.Archibald@liverpool.ac.uk

The three most recent issues of A*rchaeology in Greece* have looked at the preliminary data that has been published on the 'remarkable decade' of discoveries from all over Greece spanning the Athens Olympics of 2004. As this material has begun to be absorbed in summary form, and has been made available to readers via *AGOnline*, the range of chapters included in this issue of *AG*, which covers reports made available in 2013–2014, turns in a more consciously thematic direction.

This change of emphasis has also been enabled by a redesign of the format and style of *AG*. Our aim is to make the content more accessible, as well as easier to absorb. We hope that it will be more attractive, too. The **Newsround** section is an innovation intended to provide readers with a quick survey of important developments that are not otherwise referred to in other chapters of this year's copy. In her **View from Greece**, Catherine Morgan refers to a number of recent developments that we hope to cover in future editions of *AG*. These include conference reports and other publications on the Ionian and Aegean islands, and on the countryside of Attica. As contributors to *AG*, we hope that the selection of news items, alongside the thematic and regional reports, will give readers a clear idea of the range of new developments in Greek archaeological field research.

One of the features that this year's themed chapters share is a preoccupation with methods and approaches. **Catherine Morgan** refers in her 'View from Greece' to the latest symposium held by the Acropolis Restoration Programme, at which methods of conservation and approaches to planning as well as to the presentation of past environments were among the principal topics of discussion. **Robert Pitt's** survey of excavations in Athens looks at the relationship between some known historical locations in the centre of the city and the kinds of new data that are emerging from below ground. In the Classical Agora, there was evidently a roped-off area, perhaps used to control the public during large crowd gatherings, such as the performance of ostracism. We can also get a better understanding of the overall appearance of monuments around the open space of the Agora and of preferred locations for commemorative statues, and a greater appreciation of various sanctuaries close to the hub of Athenian life. The range of evidence that has now become available allows for nuances in the way that the atmosphere, environment and appearance of Athenian civic life may be reconstructed. At the same time, as scholars of Classical landscapes, we need to reflect on whether we should be more critical of our own assumptions about the relationships between historical events and places that we identify from material remains; this topic, discussed in a new book by Jonathan Hall (2014), is one to which I return in the 'Method in the Archaeology of Greece' section.

Ever since the beginnings of systematic investigation in and around the Piraeus in the 1880s, researchers have estimated both how big the triremes were that fitted inside the sheds and how big the shipsheds themselves may have been. There are various limitations on how much information can be drawn from surviving evidence. Estimates have to be made of the overall spatial parameters of the city's naval harbours, which are dependent on how accurately sea level changes can be pinpointed. In addition to full-size reconstructions of ancient ships, new data have now become available from Zea and Mounichia harbours, as well as from detailed spatial examinations. **Chryssanthi Papadopoulou** reviews recent research on the Piraeus, based on rescue excavations undertaken by the 36th EPCA and two major collaborative projects on shipsheds. She concludes that we need to reconsider the full range of evidence (including the costs of construction) before we decide how long an ancient shipshed actually was.

The comparative absence of surviving examples of sea-going ships that could serve as models that might help resolve some of these surprisingly intractable problems contrasts with the extraordinary survival of large numbers of inscribed stones. Excavation continues to produce new inscriptions year on year,

doi:10.1017/S0570608414000015 Archaeological Reports 60 (2013–2014) 1–3

expanding the resource of written material in ways that could not have been anticipated by previous generations. It is fitting, therefore, that *AG* should reflect the expansion of new epigraphic information from recent projects. This issue of *AG* contains a chapter on Boeotian epigraphy by **Fabienne Marchand**. She presents here for the first time the wealth of detailed information about this region's social, religious and political life. She shows how much the study of Boeotian epigraphy owes to recent archaeological research and how close the connection is between these discoveries and the spatial and topographical investigations that gave rise to them.

Epigraphy is one of the topics to which **Matthew Haysom** turns in his review of Cretan research over the last year. The reopening of the Herakleion Museum now offers scholars an opportunity to view a good range of inscriptions in the Museum's collections, as well as new displays of its unrivalled prehistoric and pre-Classical material. Haysom offers readers a review of the new galleries at Herakleion and at the recently refurbished Siteia Museum. Crete has been well covered in recent editions of *AG*, and research of the island's deep history is published with exemplary speed. Haysom's report highlights some specific research questions that can be followed up in recent publications. Among these are the baetyl from Galatas, the dating of votive material from Peak sanctuaries and the paved open-air space below the central building at Gournia.

Scientific analysis plays a key role in our understanding of ancient environments, the use of materials, the exploitation of organic resources and the behaviour of our ancient ancestors, as well as their biological attributes. Until the creation of the new format of *AG*, references to scientific research were difficult to include except in highly summarised form. In this issue, **Alexandra Livarda** provides a preliminary look at how modern studies of ancient plants in Greece are changing archaeological perceptions of how plants were adapted by ancient societies and incorporated into diets and household economies.

Livarda's survey of archaeobotanical research also complements the report by **Daniel Stewart** on rural evidence in the Roman Imperial period. Stewart reflects on the ways in which the imaginary Greek landscape has affected perceptions of rural Greece by Romanists. He discusses the fundamental difficulties of evaluating evidence (usually ceramic) that relates only indirectly to the subject that we want to understand, namely rural behaviours. Recent interdisciplinary studies, which link geophysics, archaeobotanical data and the investigation of networks with field survey, are providing more satisfying results.

Ancient historians use the terms 'urban' and 'rural' partly for convenience and partly because the distinction seems to reflect genuine ancient perceptions of environmental differences. How far such perceptions remained abstract ones is rather more difficult to articulate. Stewart's reflections on rural survey suggest that we need to enlarge the realm of the rural and invest it with different sorts of observations; different, that is, from the polarities that have been such popular tools for building conversations about the ancient past – urban and rural; male and female; slave and free. In his survey of central Greece and the Peloponnese, **David Smith** teases out some of the beacons in the rural landscape that might be added to Stewart's canvas, albeit for an earlier age; these are sites that have yet to find a place in historical narratives. Among these we might include the network of sites sacred to Zeus in and around the great shrine at Nemea (Mount Phoukas and the Tretos Pass) and the evidence of extended use, evidently for votive purposes, of cave sites in the Peloponnese. Rescue excavation has provided the parameters for appreciating the changing configuration of urban settlement at ancient Stratos, on the one hand, and Lamia or Chalcis, on the other. Smith's discussion of recent work in the northeast Peloponnese picks up trends alluded to in Catherine Morgan's 'View from Greece' (and in her report on the work of the BSA in 2013–2014). A galaxy of new and forthcoming publications is putting Corinth and the Corinthia back into the spotlight of historical and archaeological enquiry.

Catherine Morgan refers, in her 'View from Greece', to the enormous expansion of archaeological rescue work occasioned by the creation of an underground railway system for Thessaloniki's burgeoning urban and suburban population. This has created unprecedented challenges for representatives of the Archaeological Service, as the latest instalment of this story shows. **Zosia Archibald** presents a survey of the archaeological rewards accruing from rescue work in the city over the last decade.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0570608414000015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A good deal of the rescue work in Macedonia and Thrace has thrown the spotlight on the anatomy of urban evolution, although some rural sites in western Macedonia, in the Chalkidiki and in Thrace, offer vivid, if localized views of successful farmsteads (see Stewart's report). Re-peopling these landscapes in convincing ways remains challenging. Here too there must have been men like Socrates, whose worldly goods could be valued at five minas (500dr.), alongside others, like Kritoboulos, whose estate was valued by the philosopher at more than a hundred times that sum (Xen. *Oec*. 2.3). Houses at Olynthos look much more similar, to their excavators at least, than the known range of house prices implies (based on sales or loans, they range between 170dr. and 5,300dr.) (Cahill 2002: 276–81).

The magnificent tomb that is in the process of excavation at Amphipolis, and whose most up-to-date appearance is described in more detail in Catherine Morgan's 'View from Greece', has already aroused a great deal of interest in Greece and beyond. Many of the features that are beginning to emerge within and outside the funeral mound are highly unusual. Those that have been brought to light so far – the masonry peribolos wall, the multiple chambers, the use of mosaic and sculpture in the round as well as an early example of archaistic style in the twin Caryatids – are components that lack obvious models. There are stylistic precedents in some cases. In other respects, as in the case of Tomb 2 at Vergina, archaeologists and historians are confronting novel or innovative features that remind us of how little we still know about this liminal region and about the creative energies of the last quarter of the fourth century BC.

Bibliography

Cahill, N. (2002) *Household and City Organization at Olynthus* (New Haven and London)

Hall, J. (2014) *Artifact and Artifice. Classical Archaeology and the Ancient Historian* (Chicago and London)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0570608414000015 Published online by Cambridge University Press