

AGORA EXCAVATIONS – 2010

Preliminary Report

Excavations were carried out in the Athenian Agora from June 14th to August 6th, 2010, with a team of some 65 student volunteers, drawn from forty universities and twelve countries. Primary funding came from the Packard Humanities Institute, with additional contributions from Randolph-Macon College and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. The Samuel Kress foundation provided support for the conservation interns. Our work could not be done without the support of these institutions and, on behalf of the entire staff, their participation is gratefully acknowledged here.

Section BH (Plan 1)

This section overlies the east end of the Stoa Poikile, first built in ca. 470 BC and adorned soon thereafter with a series of panel paintings which gave the building its name. It functioned both as popular meeting place and a public art museum. In the 3rd century BC it was the preferred classroom of the philosopher Zeno and his followers, who became known accordingly as the Stoics.

Excavations were carried out under the supervision of Johanna Hobratschk (Johns Hopkins University). We continued to clear late fill overlying the stoa, in particular the fill which was deposited at the time the back wall was robbed out. Soft dark earth was removed in the line of the wall, and produced pottery as late as the 10th century AD. A good cross-section of the foundations was exposed (**Fig. 1**). The orthostates rest on a broad euthynteria 0.92 m. wide and 0.255 m. thick. This in turn rests on a foundation of squared blocks set side by side longitudinally, creating a course ca. 1.17 m. wide by 0.38 m. high. The bottom course of foundations was made up of blocks 1.20 m. (ca. 4 ancient feet) long, set as headers. The top two courses were clamped; there are no traces of clamps in the two foundation courses. No dowel-holes have been recognized. The blocks are all of a somewhat soft poros limestone, tan in color. A handsome intact lamp (**Fig. 2**) decorated with a cross (BH 285 = *Agora VII*, #2553, etc.) reflects the use of the building at least into the 5th century AD. Also recovered were broken fragments of the terracotta aqueduct running along the back wall of the Stoa, which we believe is that built by Kimon to bring water out to the grove of the Academy (Plutarch, *Life of Kimon* 13). Two Byzantine wells which fall within the interior of the building were left largely undug for the present.

Most of our efforts were directed toward exploring the area directly behind and north of the Stoa Poikile, where we have little information about its use before the Byzantine period. The principal installation recovered this season was a *Hellenistic cistern* (J 2: 6; **Fig. 3**). The shaft, lined with assorted stones at the top, was 0.80 m. in diameter, with hand-holes set on opposite sides in the usual manner, widening as it went down and lined with waterproof cement. The diameter at the bottom was 1.55 m. and the total depth 2.80 m. At a depth of just over a meter, we encountered a mass of fragments of painted wall plaster. It divides into two groups, one red, the other pale blue (**Fig. 4**). No pieces with figures or vignettes were recognized. Lower down we encountered additional debris, some of it architectural, but not enough to suggest actual demolition debris of a whole building: a terracotta sima, pieces of rooftiles, and fragments of pebble mosaic set in lime mortar. We also recovered a fair amount of what seems to be the terracotta puteal set over the mouth of the cistern. Pottery consisted of 'Megarian bowl' fragments with relief decoration, west-slope kantharoi, with both spur and strap handles (the latter decorated with heads of satyrs in relief), unguentaria, small bowls, pyxides, lids, and loomweights of both lead and terra cotta. The date of abandonment should be late 3rd/early 2nd century BC. Also recovered was a silver coin of Histiaia in northern Euboia (**Fig. 5**). No clearly associated architecture was found in the immediate vicinity.

SECTION BZ (Plan 2, Fig. 6)

This section lies north of the west end of the Stoa Poikile, and just east of a north-south road leading out of the Agora square. Throughout antiquity (5th BC – 5th AD) this street was lined along its eastern side by a series of shops.

Excavations in Section BZ were supervised by Kevin Daly (Bucknell University). Here, we concentrated on the northern parts of the Classical Commercial building, in an attempt to clarify its plan and somewhat complex building history. In several places it seems as though we are beginning to encounter levels which preceded the construction of the building late in the 5th century BC. In Room 6, digging below the floor, we encountered several dozen *ostraka* most of them cast against Xanthippos, son of Arriphron (father of Perikles) who was exiled in 484/3 BC (Fig. 7), though Lysimachos and Habron are represented as well. Also recovered, towards the north end, was a handsome well-preserved double-tanged arrowhead of bronze (Fig. 8).

In an area which should lie just outside and east of the building we had a hard-packed surface into which was cut a small shallow pit lined with red clay. Within the pit were assorted stones and a few fragments of black-glazed pottery, several of which mended up to give the full profile of a small bowl with straight sides and a slightly rounded base, decorated with glazed stripes, a shape and decoration not recognized before in the Agora and rarely in Attica (Fig. 9). A rare parallel, found in the Kerameikos excavations, seems to be a Euboian import. From the associated pottery found in the pit, this unusual shape should date to the 6th century BC.

SECTION BETA THETA (Plan 3)

Section Beta Theta, the most recent to be opened, overlies the western half of the Stoa Poikile. At this stage we are still exploring medieval levels (Byzantine, Frankish, and Ottoman) which covered the Classical remains after their abandonment in the 6th century AD.

Excavations in Section Beta Theta were supervised by Mike Laughy (UC Berkeley, U. of Cincinnati). At the west, we continued to recover numerous animal bones, many of them from large animals such as horse and cows (Fig. 10); according to a preliminary study by Thanos Webb, sheep, goats, and pigs are also represented, along with the occasional rabbit. The pit, which also had fair amounts of lime in it, seems to date from the 15/16th century AD and presumably lay outside the limits of the town at that time. The occasion of this large deposit is not clear, though the rarity of butcher-cuts make it unlikely that they represent the simple disposal of animals slaughtered for food. We are indebted to Photini Kondyli for her analysis of our Byzantine and post-Byzantine pottery.

Lower down in this same area, we continued to find broken pottery, but also a scatter of about three dozen bronze coins. Cleaned up, these proved to be Frankish (Fig. 11), dating to the 13th century AD, soon after Athens was taken in 1207 by the Franks.

To the east, we uncovered more walls of the Byzantine settlement which seems to have developed in this area in the 10/11th centuries AD. Several walls were exposed, made of field stones set in clay, many of the stones clearly reused ancient blocks, several of them of marble. Two rooms, side by side, were largely exposed. Measuring 7.00 m. by 3.60 m. and ca. 6.50 by 2.20 m., they are larger than the usual rooms found in this area in this period. Both a footing trench and a well-defined robbing trench for the west end of the dividing wall were cleared. In the southwest room a deep fill or large pit was uncovered, with extensive traces of burning in the form of fine dark ash (Fig. 12). No debris

or large chunks of carbon were found, seeming to preclude the possibility that this might represent a destruction layer or industrial debris in primary deposition. Lower down, this soft dark fill produced a very large number of goat horns (ca. 850). Most showed signs of having been sawn, usually not far from the tips (Fig. 13). Such limited removal makes it likely that this has more to do with dulling the horns rather than any manufacturing process. We have no idea where the rest of these goats went. Lower down still in the same pit, we encountered several largely complete pots of the middle Byzantine period (Fig. 14). They were of different shapes, three of coarse fabric and unglazed, and one green-glazed.

The general sequence of later remains in this area now seems clear. We are at the edge of the city, and depending on its fortunes, Athens expanded or contracted across the excavations, like a beach between high and low tide. In the 7th to 9th centuries AD, the area was largely abandoned, with the town clustered around the base of the Acropolis, east of the Stoa of Attalos, within the limits of the post-Herulian wall. When life in the Byzantine world improved in the 10th to 12th centuries, the town expanded out this far and the area was thickly inhabited, as indicated by the walls of numerous rooms and the many pithoi and other provisions for storage, suggesting a fully urban settlement, accompanied by the construction of small churches nearby. With the arrival of the Franks in the 13th century, the area was abandoned once again and was now used as a dumping ground, hence the large deposits of very fragmentary glazed pottery of the 13th and 14th centuries. The use of the area as a dump continued with the arrival of the Ottomans in the mid-15th century, now with the addition of the large deposit of animal bones. The pig bones, of course, suggest that the Greek residents of Athens were contributing to the debris. From early drawings, it seems that the town expanded out to this area again sometime in the 17th or 18th century, and the dumping ground was pushed farther out to the northwest. When Edward Dodwell drew the town in 1805, the area is shown covered with houses once again, and the dump - two large mounds labeled the *staktothiki* (ash heaps) - is shown outside the city wall built in 1778, in the area of the present Kerameikos.

In the north scarp of the goat-horn pit we also began to uncover a large *sculpted fragment of marble* (Fig. 15), measuring as much as 0.75 m. on a side. The block will require further study, but it clearly consists of a representation of a pile of military equipment, and served as the base for a trophy or a statue. Identified so far are four or five shields, part of a cuirass, and the handle of a sword. One of the shields has a club carved in relief as its device. Several parallels are known from the island of Delos, including shields decorated with clubs, associated with the Macedonian dynasty established after the death of Alexander the Great. Our block, too, should probably date to the Hellenistic period (323-146 BC). The weaponry presumably is meant to stand for a military victory, but it remains to be seen which dynast or general occupied the base. Anathyrosis at the back, if original, suggests that the piece may be part of a larger monument, in which case a trophy rather than a statue should perhaps be restored. Its large size and excellent state of preservation suggest that the piece has not traveled far and it may well originally have been set up in the prominent location immediately in front of the Stoa Poikile. It remains to be seen if an appropriate foundation will be found lower down. The Stoa Poikile - with its paintings of Athenian triumphs both mythological and historical - was a favored place for the display of military success. Pausanias also saw shields taken at Pylos and Skione on display in the building, and nearby he records a gate carrying a trophy celebrating an Athenian victory over the Macedonians.

SECTION DELTA (Plan 4)

Section Delta is in the old area of excavations, just south of the Tholos, dining-hall of the senate, and just outside the boundary stones of the Agora square.

Laura Gawlinski (Randolph-Macon College, Loyola University Chicago) supervised excavations in Section Delta, west of the Middle Stoa. Here we continued to work on the use of this area in the Classical period, that is, whether its primary function was civic, commercial, or domestic or some combination of the three. On balance, it appears as though this area was used largely for private purposes, despite its proximity to the Agora square and the adjacent public buildings. This same crowding in of private establishments can be seen also to the east, under the Library of Pantainos, and to the northwest, behind the west end of the Poikile Stoa.

Working south of the area explored in 2009, we excavated shallow fill, much of it hard gravel showing few signs of human activity. In general, this southern area is surprisingly empty, given its central location. There are few signs of activity in the Classical period, though several low retaining walls, one of nicely squared blocks, suggest some landscaping of the area. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods the area was crisscrossed with small terracotta drains, presumably distributing overflow from the southwest fountainhouse, which lies only a few meters to the southeast. It seems something of a mystery why this area, so close to the Agora square, was apparently not built on for much of antiquity.

INDOOR WORK

Students also participated in rotation in assorted museum-related projects in the Stoa of Attalos. A full inventory of the sculpture collection (3500+ pieces) was carried out in collaboration with the Α' Ephoreia jointly supervised by Κλειο Τσόγκα and Sylvie Dumont. (Fig. 16). All the sculptures were removed and cleaned, checked against the catalogue cards, rephotographed, and replaced on the shelves, which were also cleaned. Processing material from the water-sieve was also carried out, under the supervision of Amber and Harry Laughy. Five interns gained valuable practical experience during this summer's excavation season. Conservation, with its four interns, cleaned many of the objects for this report and offered several workshops to the volunteers, while a museum studies intern assisted the Records Department.

This brief and preliminary report of the work done at the excavations of the Athenian Agora in 2010 has been prepared for various groups: contributing institutions, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ephoreias of Classical and Byzantine Antiquities, and the student volunteers. The conclusions drawn should be regarded as very tentative. Photos for this report were taken by Craig Mauzy and the plans are the work of James Herbst, assisted by Annie Hooton.

Respectfully submitted,
John McK. Camp II
Director, Agora Excavations
August, 2010

Athenian Agora- Area BH

August 2, 2010
Scale- 1:125

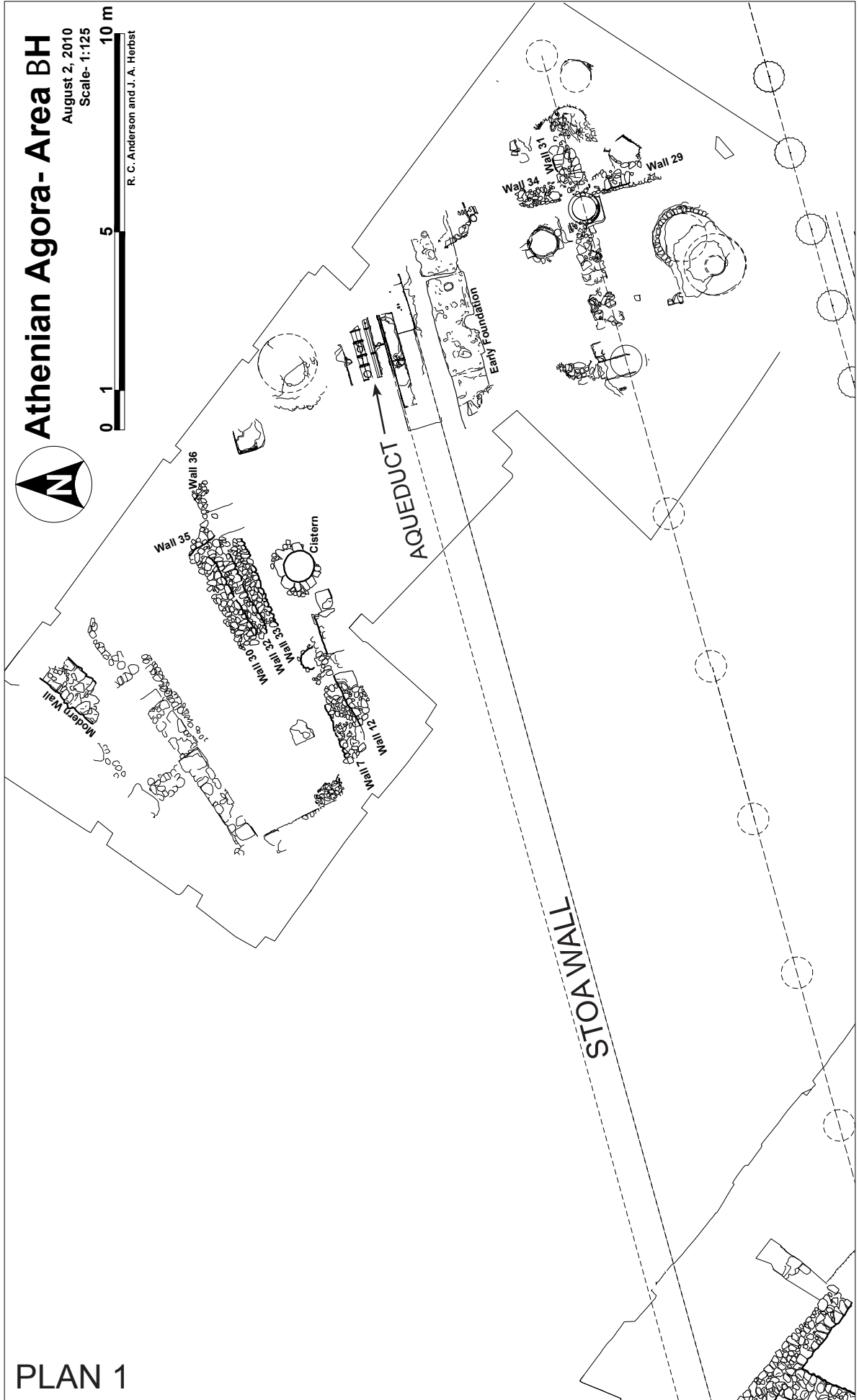
10 m

5

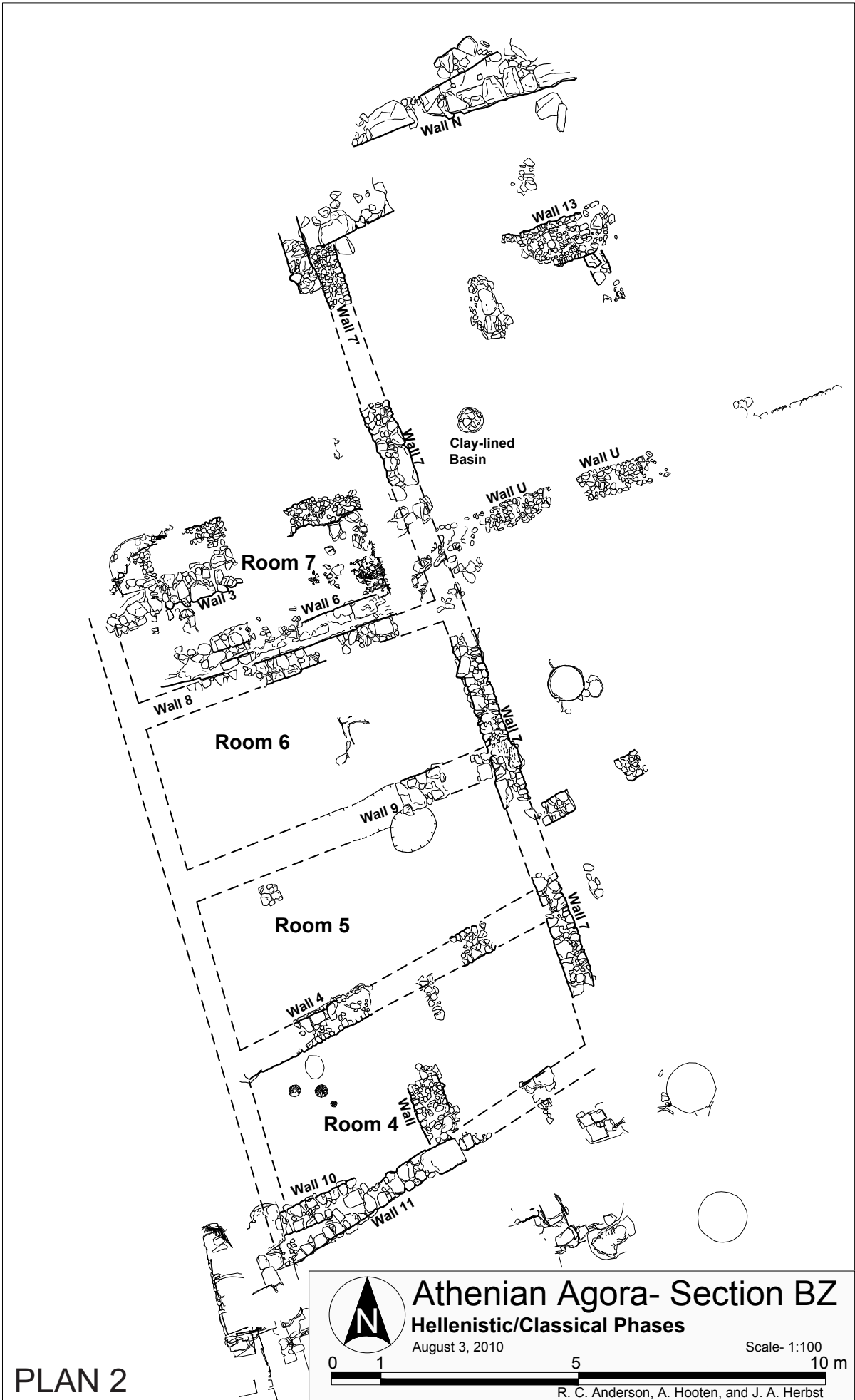
1

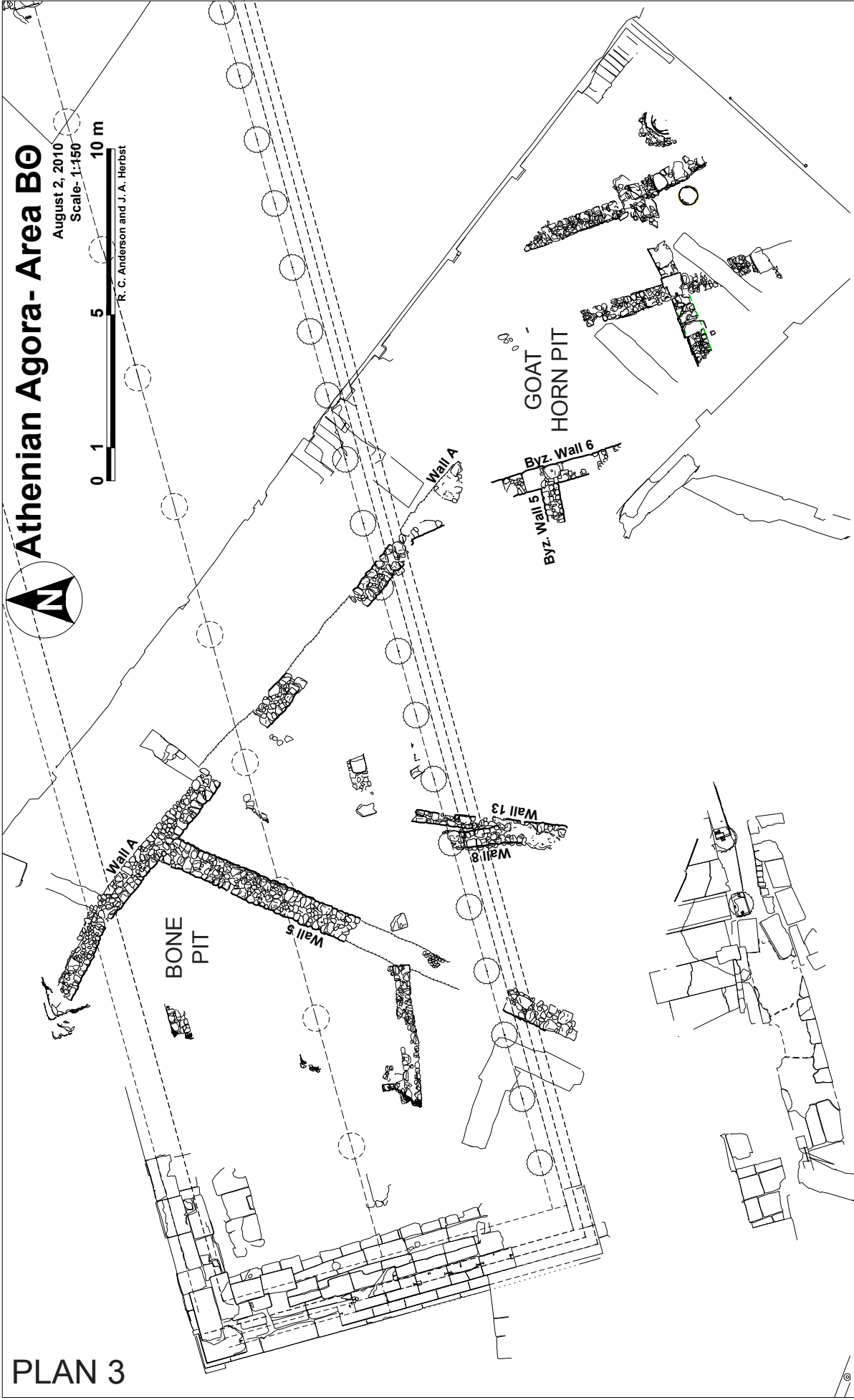
0

R. C. Anderson and J. A. Herbst



PLAN 1





Athenian Agora - Area B0

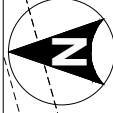
August 2, 2010
Scale: 1:150

10 m

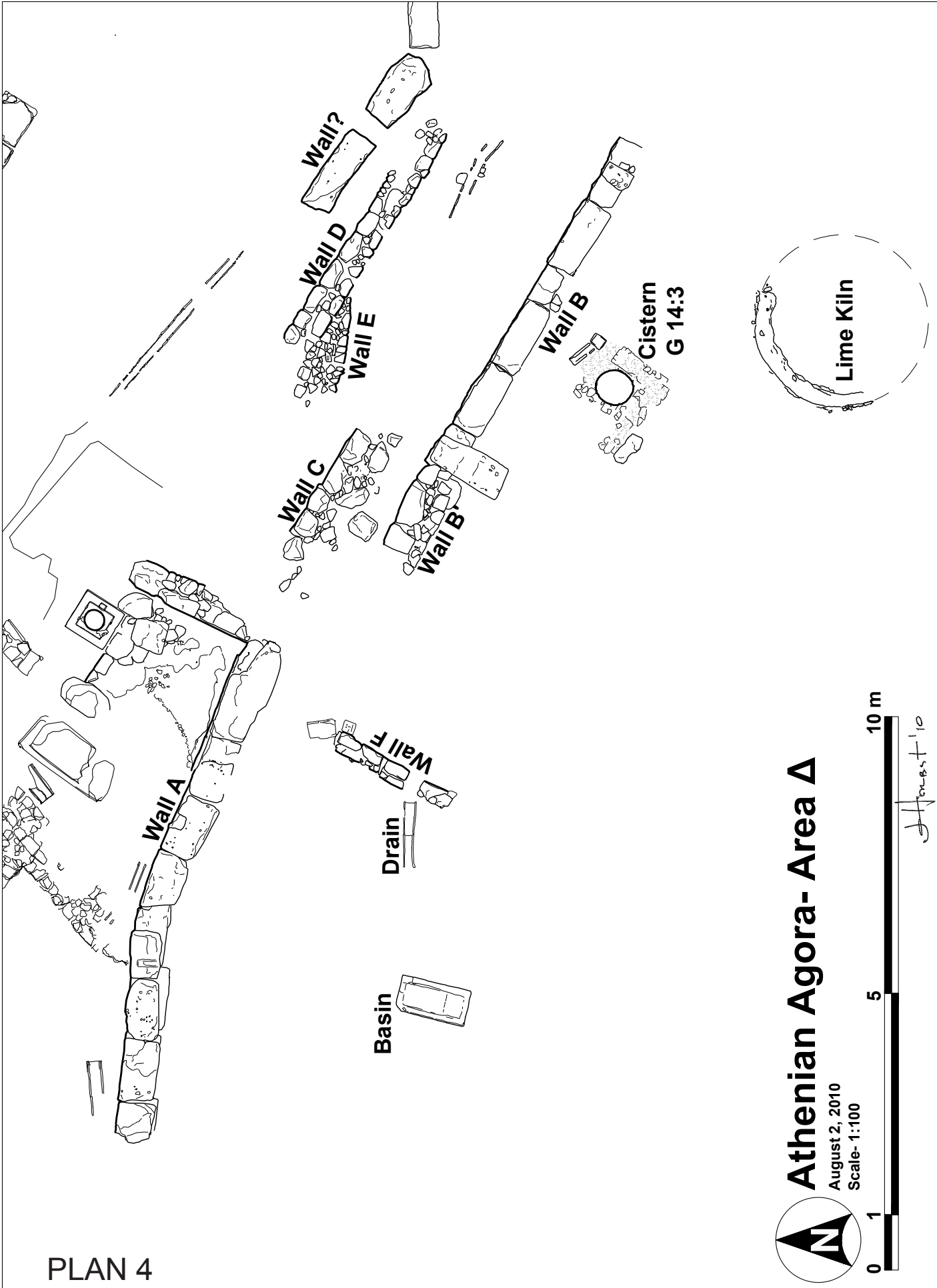
5

1

R. C. Anderson and J. A. Herbst



PLAN 3



PLAN 4

Athenian Agora- Area Δ

August 2, 2010
Scale- 1:100



Handwritten signature



1. Foundations of the stoa back wall.
Kimonian aqueduct at lower left.



2. Late Roman lamp from Section BH.



3. Hellenistic cistern ca. 200 BC.



4. Hellenistic wall plaster.



5. Silver coin of Histiaia



6. Section BZ from the north.



7. Ostrakon of Xanthippos, son of Arriphron



8. Bronze arrowhead



9. Bowl from Section BZ; 6th century BC.



10. Animal bones in section Beta Theta.



11. Frankish coins from Secion Beta Theta (13th century).



12. Section Beta Theta East from north, wall with robbing trench at lower left, late pit in center.



13. A selection of goat horns from the pit.



14. (above) Pots from the pit in Section Beta Theta.



15. (right) Sculpted shield at edge of the Beta Theta pit.



16. Sculpture storage.