

AGORA EXCAVATIONS
Summary Report on the 2011 Season

Excavations in the Athenian Agora were conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens from June 13th to August 5th, 2011. The work was carried out in three sections, two of them overlying the Stoa Poikile and one in the Panathenaic Way.

As always, our principal collaborator has been the Packard Humanities Institute. Additional support was provided by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Randolph-Macon College, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Behrakis Foundation, and private individuals. The work presented here could not have been done without their interest and help, which is gratefully acknowledged here. The work was supervised for the A' Ephoreia of Classical and Prehistoric Antiquities, by Mrs. Nikoletta Saraga and Klio Tsoga and it is a pleasure here to acknowledge the collegial collaboration we have enjoyed with them over the years. Some 55 students participated, representing thirty-one colleges and universities from seven countries. This preliminary report is written for those volunteers to take with them at the end of the season and should be regarded as very tentative; further analysis, excavation, and discussion may well lead to different conclusions from those presented here.

PANATHENAIC WAY (Section Beta Gamma) (**Figs. 1 and 2**)

Excavations in this section were overseen by Laura Gawlinski and were concentrated on the main street of the ancient city, which leads from the Dipylon Gate, through the Agora, and up to the Acropolis. Rescue excavations by the A' Ephoreia of the Ministry in the adjacent railway bed of the Athens-Peiraeus railway in the Fall of 2010 and Winter of 2011 have caused us to reexamine our interpretation of a row of square stone sockets designed to hold upright wooden posts which lies across the line of the roadway. When first uncovered, the five post-holes were originally interpreted as part of the simple starting-line (hysplex) for an early racetrack, of the sort known from Priene and Didyma in Asia Minor. It is now clear that they form part of a temporary roped-off enclosure, known as a perischoinisma in Greek, and cannot be part of a starting line. Three sides of this enclosure are defined, but the fourth, to the east, has not been found. An area of unexcavated fill at the extreme east end of the section was therefore opened up in order to determine, if possible, the full east-west dimensions. A good sequence of seven hard-packed gravel road surfaces were excavated, dating from early Roman (1st BC/AD) to early Hellenistic times (3rd BC). The post-holes, which were originally dated late 5th BC, lie somewhat lower down and should be exposed next season.

A second trench was opened up to examine the road surfaces somewhat to the west. A series of several hard-packed level surfaces has suggested in the past that the road itself may have been used as a race track (Hesperia 65, 1996, p. 233, pl. 65 b). With the loss of the putative starting line, however, it seemed worthwhile to check this hypothesis. Here we encountered four surfaces above the 5th century BC levels, dating from the 1st to the 4th centuries BC.

STOA POIKILE (Section Beta Eta) (**Fig. 3**)

Excavations in Section Beta Eta, over and behind the east end of the Painted Stoa, were supervised by Johanna Hobrathschk. Within the Stoa Poikile, just next to the easternmost interior column, we excavated a well (L 2: 2) (**Figs. 4-6**), which had been uncovered several years ago. The assumption was that it would prove to be associated with the Middle Byzantine walls found higher up, but this turned out not to be the case. The well was dug to a depth of close to 7 meters, in places it was stone-lined including several pieces of worked limestone and marble; elsewhere it was tile-lined. The diameter was ca. 0.65 m. and there was ample water from 1.00 meter on down. Over 100 pots were recovered, many intact or nearly so (**Fig. 7**). They were largely closed shapes of various sizes, undecorated except for a thin dull wash or slip. Predominant were small wheel-ridged pitchers (over 50%), decorated with gouged lines oriented vertically or obliquely. Other shapes included table amphoras, micaceous water jars, and assorted mid-sized storage jars with rounded bottoms, many with wheel-ridged bodies. Several of the larger jars had substantial dipinti in bright red paint on the shoulder (**Fig. 8**), and one gouged pitcher has what seems to be a name incised on its neck. The assemblage as

a whole is close to the upper layers of Robinson's Group M (Agora V, plates 29-33), dating to the 5th and 6th centuries AD. Two lamps were also recovered. One, in red clay, has a disk showing Eros playing a flute, right (**Fig. 9**). The underside carries the name of a well-known fabricant: XIO/NHS, whose workshop was active in the 2nd half of the 4th through the mid-5th centuries AD (Agora VII, pp. 55-57; Broneer, *Corinth IV*.ii, No. 1130, pl. XXIX; and B. Bottger, *Kerameikos XVI, Die Kaiserzeitlichen Lampen von Kerameikos*, Munich 2002, pp. 77-79 for the Chione workshop). The other lamp, with a plain disk, herringbone rim, and an incised branch on the base, is similar to Agora VII, nos. 2722-2734, also dated to the 5th century AD. In addition to the pottery, some two dozen pig mandibles (**Fig. 10**) were found, along with a fair number of pine cones, peach pits, and other organic material.

It thus seems as though the well may be part of the latest phase of the use of the Stoa, when the open colonnades were closed with rubble walls in order to create rooms (**Fig. 11**). A scatter of bronze coins found in previous seasons suggests that the rooms may have been used as shops. Such walling up of stoa colonnades in the late Roman period are relatively common, and legislation prohibiting them appears in both the Theodosian Code (XV) and the Codex Justinianus (I and VIII) (Cf. H. Saradi, *The Byzantine City in the Sixth Century*, Athens 2006, pp. 186-208). Other examples in the Agora can still be seen west of the Royal Stoa and were also found in the northern stoa of the Library of Pantainos. The process is often associated with the appropriation of public buildings for use by private individuals. In the case of the Stoa, troubles caused by the invasion of Alaric and the Visigoths in ca. 396 AD (Agora XXIV, pp. 48-56) may well have weakened any public authority over the building, which by this time lay some 200 meters outside the fortified limits of the city. We know that it had been stripped of its famous paintings at about this same time. The Bishop Synesios visited in the years around AD 400 and was bitterly disappointed when he discovered that the paintings had recently been removed: May the ship's captain who brought me here perish miserably. Present day Athens possesses nothing venerable except the illustrious names of places. When the sacrifice of a victim has been completed, the skin is left as a token of the animal that once existed; in the same way now that philosophy has departed hence, all that is left for us is to walk around and wonder at the Academy and the Lyceum, and (by Zeus) the Poikile Stoa after which the philosophy of Chrysippos is named, now no longer many-colored: the proconsul took away the boards to which Polygnotos of Thasos committed his art (Epist. 135 = Agora III, no. 94; see also Epist. 54 = Agora III, No. 93). There is also some evidence that later, in the third quarter of the 5th century AD, the Vandals made an attack on Athens, an event which may well have hastened the abandonment of the area, the Stoa, and the well (For the Vandals in Athens: Agora XXIV, pp. 78-79; *Hesperia* 66, 1997, pp. 511-512, and *Hesperia* 76, 2007, p. 640, no. 10).

STOA POIKILE (Section Beta Theta)

Excavations over the middle part of the Painted Stoa were supervised by Michael Laughy. Here we are still in Byzantine levels, one to two meters above the Classical stoa. Excavations have concentrated on the east and west ends of the section for the past several years and have exposed a Byzantine settlement which seems to date largely to the 11th and 12th centuries AD (**Figs. 12 and 13**). Numerous rubble walls make up the outlines of several rooms of what seem to be relatively modest houses set closely together, with features such as packed earth floors, doorways (some blocked), pits, and pithoi. In some rooms, there were well-defined floor surfaces which await exploration, while to the south the fill was deep and undifferentiated. Two largely complete pots were found at about the same level as the four found last season in the goat horn pit. Two pots found at a similar level elsewhere in this Byzantine neighborhood proved to contain the remains of new-born infants, but neither of the pots found this season were used for this purpose.

To the west, we are at a higher level, but encountering a similar situation: numerous Middle Byzantine rooms and walls following the northeast/southwest orientation of the Classical remains determined by the course of the Eridanos river below (Figs. 14 and 15). Excavations this season exposed the tops of several walls, often with adjacent falls of tile and other debris. They align with the remains found years ago overlying the west end of the Stoa Poikile (*Hesperia* 53, 1984, pp. 50-57, and *Hesperia* 66, 1997, fig. 7 on p. 522).

The walls in both areas are full of reused material, including many large architectural blocks, at least one of which can be identified as a wall-block of the Stoa Poikile. Other well-cut Classical blocks of both marble and

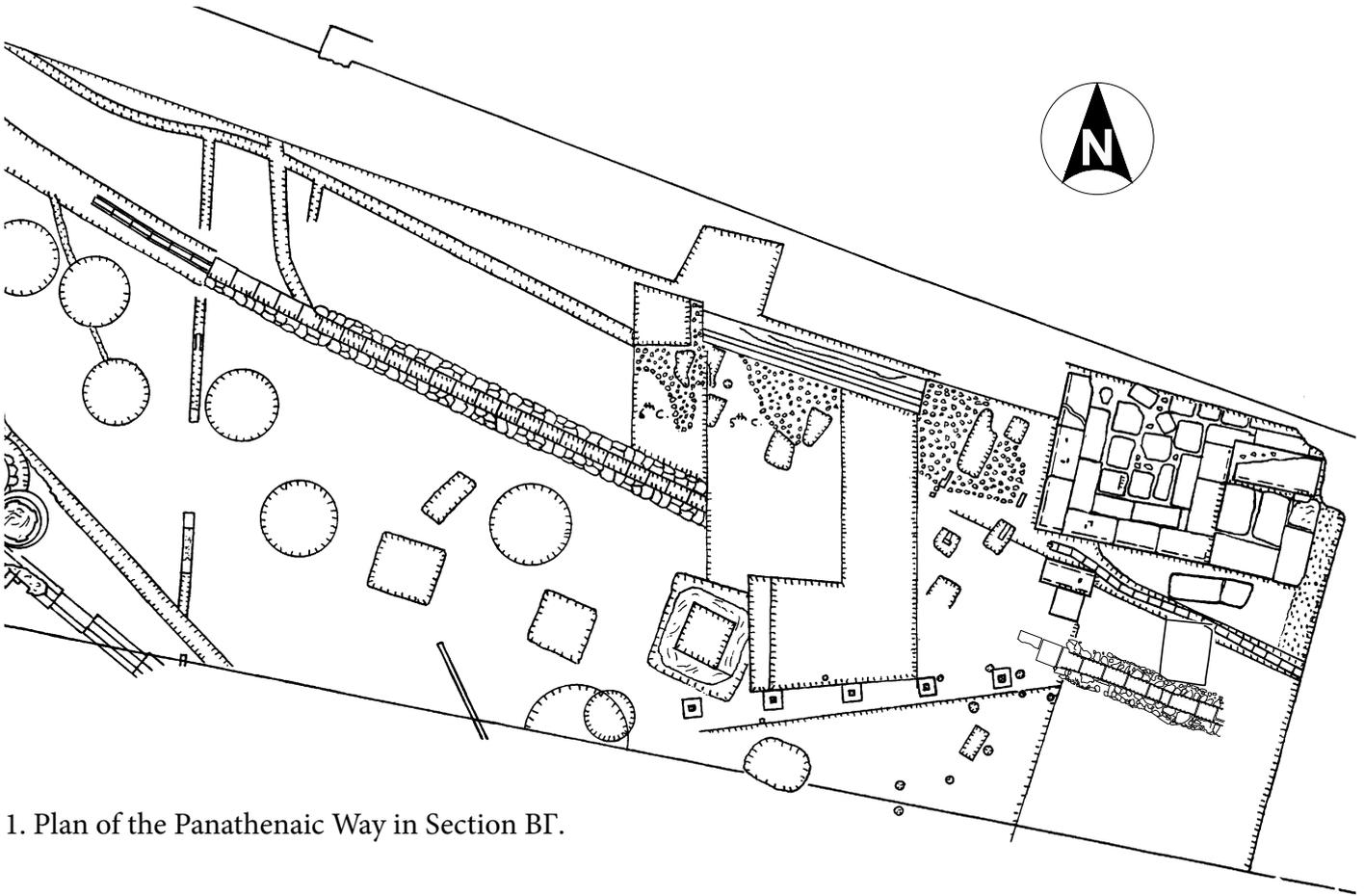
limestone have not yet been attributed. In sculpture, we have the right half of a funerary stele cut in very low relief, showing part of a banqueting hero, an attendant, and a table with the meal spread out on it (**Fig. 16**). A lamp decorated with a cross and a graffito with an incised cross and part of an inscription suggest Christian activity in the area (**Figs. 17 and 18**), which lies just north of the remains of the little chapel of Aghios Nikolaos, excavated in 1990-1992 (*Hesperia* 66, 1997, pp. 538-546).

INDOOR WORK

With the assistance of a rotating team of volunteers, Katie Petrole supervised a project to reorganize and label the extensive collection of amphoras stored in the basement of the Stoa of Attalos (**Fig. 19**).

As always, the outdoor work was supported by the indoor staff of the Stoa, whose contributions are acknowledged here with gratitude: Craig Mauzy (deputy director), Jan Jordan and Sylvie Dumont (records), Bruce Hartzler, assisted by Matt Baumann and Amber Laughy (computer archives and recording), Karen Lovén (conservation) with three Kress interns (Ashley Jehle, Sara Levin, and Robin Ohern), Angeliqe Sideris (photography), George Dervos (logistics) and Ing-Marie Raptis (housekeeping). Drafting on site was done by James Herbst and Annie Hooton.

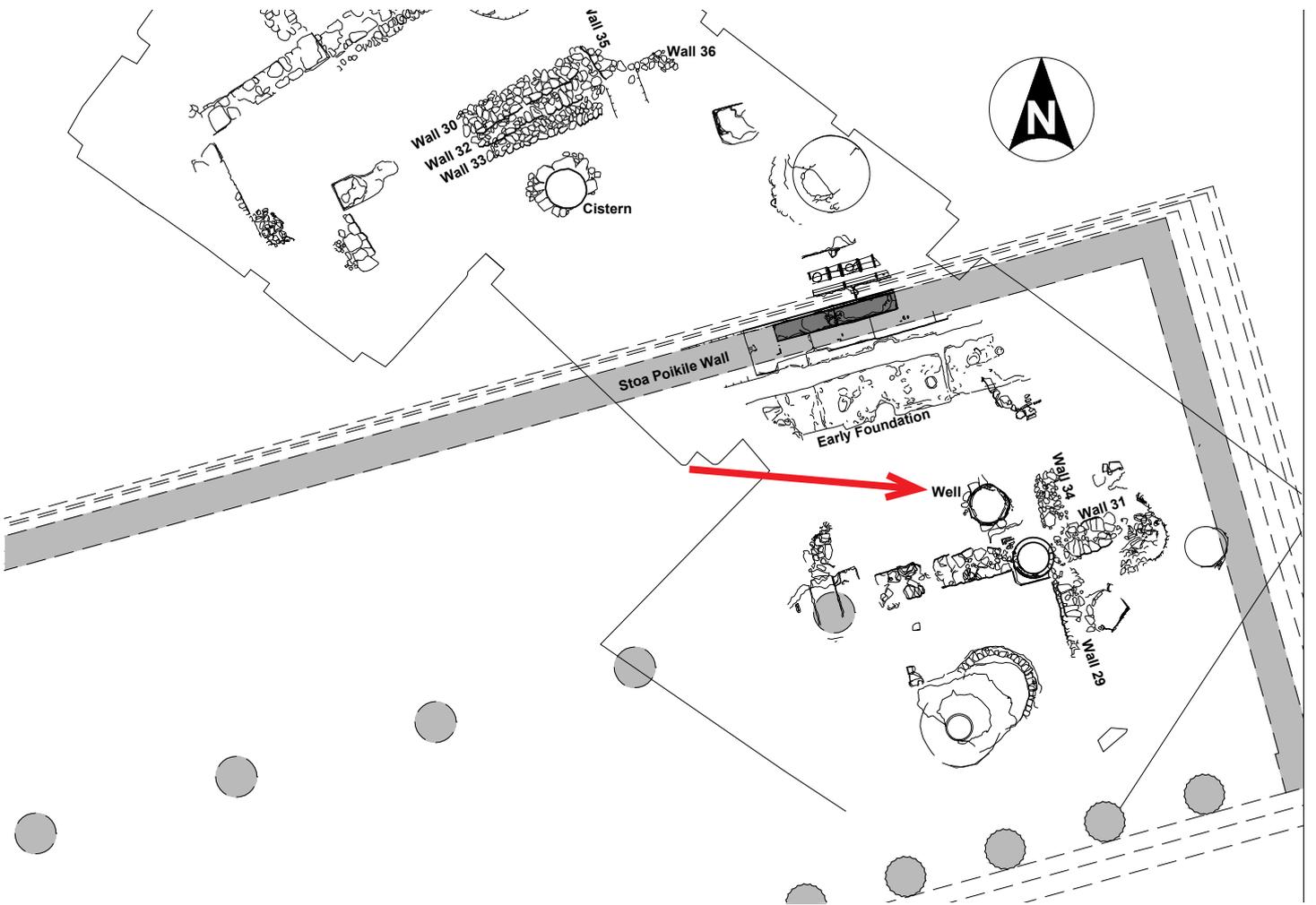
Respectfully submitted,
John McK. Camp II
August 2011.



1. Plan of the Panathenaic Way in Section BF.



2. East end of Section BF from the north with post holes at right.



3. Plan of Section BH, east end of the Stoa Poikile. Arrow points to Well L 2: 2.



4. Excavating Well L 2: 2.



5.



6.



7. Pots from Well L 2: 2.



8. Graffito from Well L 2: 2.



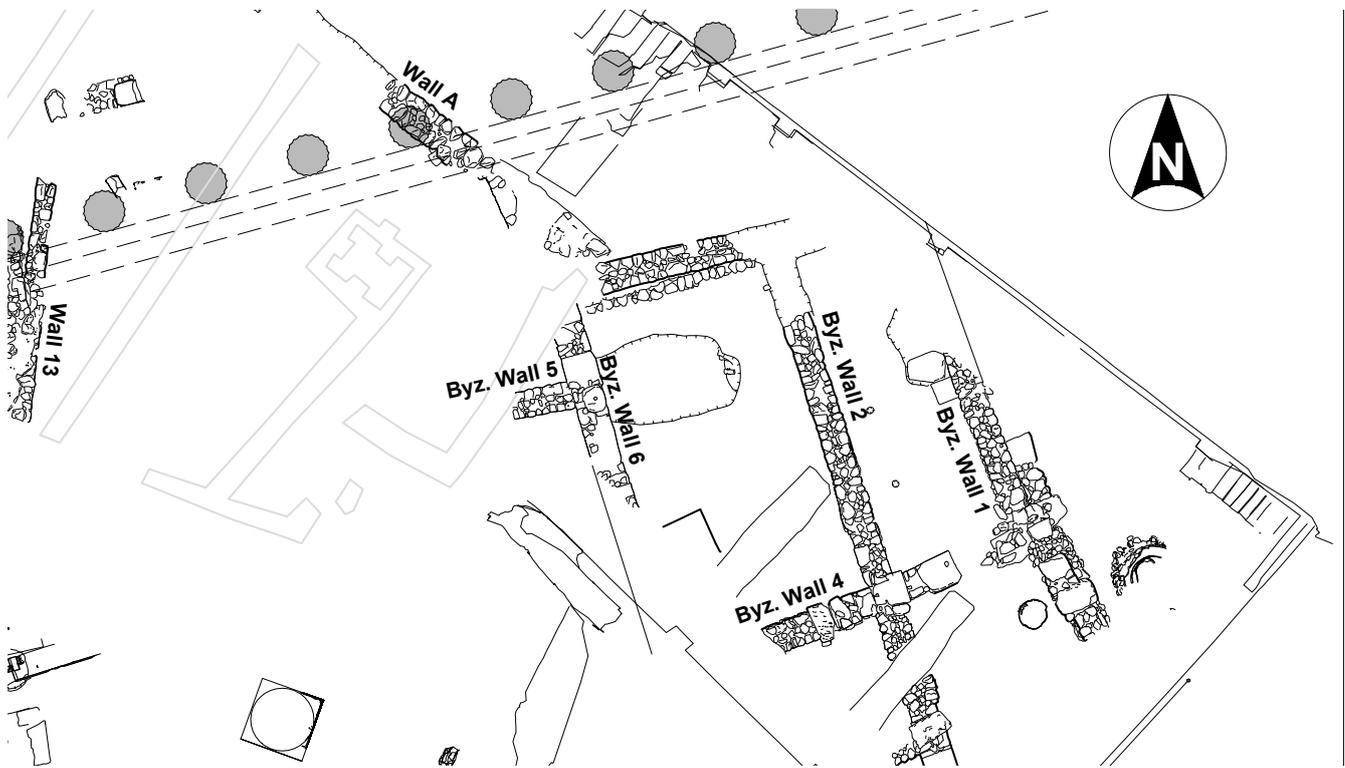
9 . Lamp from Well L 2: 2.



10. Pig mandibles



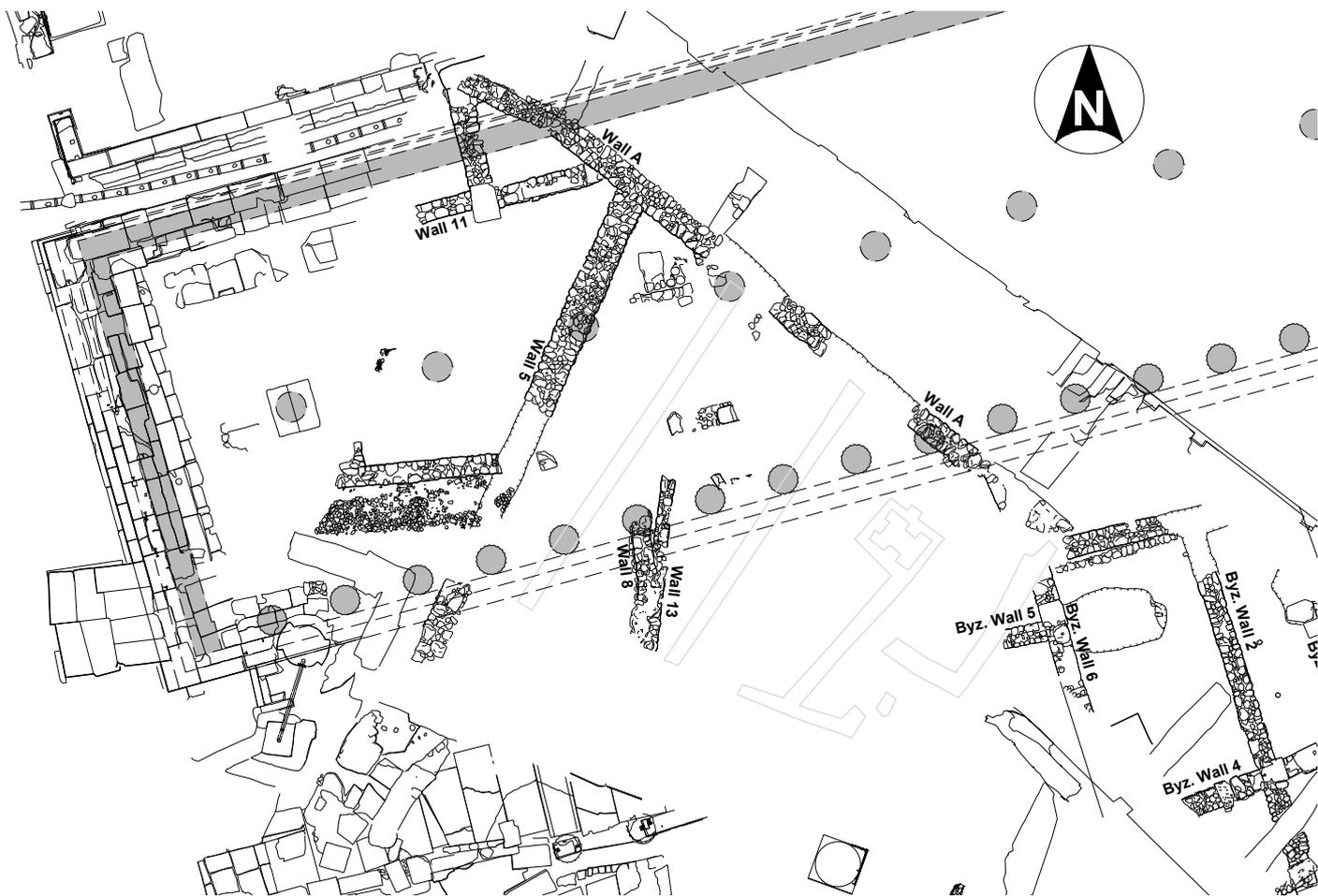
11. East end of Section BH from the north, showing Well L 2: 2, center column, and Late Roman walls.



12. Plan of the Middle Byzantine remains in the east half of Section BΘ.



13. Middle Byzantine remains in the east half of Section BΘ, looking northwest.



14. Plan of the Byzantine Walls in west half of Section BΘ.



15. West end of Section BΘ, looking southwest.



16. Banqueting Hero relief from a Byzantine wall.



17. Lamp with cross.



18. Incised sherd with cross.



19. Amphora storage in the Stoa of Attalos.