

BSA Fieldwork Bursary Report – Lucy Lawrence, Palaikastro Phase Four Project (Crete)

The BSA fieldwork bursary funded my travel to the Minoan site Palaikastro, Eastern Crete. The purpose of this trip was to take casts from the molar teeth of ancient sheep and goat mandibles in preparation for dental microwear analysis; a method which examines the microscopic features on the enamel surface to extract evidence for diet. While preservation of bones and teeth at the site was poor, 20 teeth were suitable for analysis. This sample number is unfortunately less than the previously proposed 30 mandibles, but will provide an insight to the diet and management of sheep and goats at Palaikastro. The photography and recording of microwear is currently being completed at the University of Sheffield.

Another aim was to collect mandibles from modern sheep and goats feeding in the surrounding landscape of Palaikastro as a comparative to archaeological samples. Unfortunately, the collection of modern mandibles was not possible due to the incompatible timing of slaughter and fieldwork. However, relationships have been established with local herders for future collection. A field walk of local traditional pastures provided valuable insight to the adaptations and strategies of farmers facing, at times, extremely arid conditions. Dung samples were also collected from goats grazing in these dry uplands and will be analysed using phytolith extraction to record the quantity of abrasives in this type of diet.

Many thanks is given to the SPHS, the BSA and the archaeological team at Palaikastro for the opportunity to conduct this fieldwork, and to Paul Halstead and Valasia Isaakidou for their guidance and assistance.

British School at Athens, Fieldwork Bursary 2016: Kate Caraway

Synopsis of project

The ancient Greek city of Olynthos is famous as a planned town, laid out on a grid plan, with extensively excavated examples of Greek domestic housing. The current Olynthos Project uses excavation and modern analytical methods to investigate at the level of the household, neighbourhood and city-wide perspectives, in order to understand the society and economy of the city. Data is collected through geophysical survey, surface survey, excavation and GIS mapping, in combination with geoarchaeology, faunal and botanical analysis and ceramic analysis.

The 2016 summer season, building on previous seasons, gathered further data for analysis through surface survey of the unexcavated areas and the wider hinterland of the city, ceramic analysis, flotation and excavation. The excavation primarily consisted of eight trenches on the North Hill, positioned to reveal the outer walls of the house, the exposure of which forms one of the principle focuses of the project across its lifetime. Further test trenches were opened on the South Hill, the area of the site which is believed to be the location of significantly older – potentially continuous – occupation, predating the formally planned area on the North Hill.

Experience and Impact

The season was four weeks long, the majority of which I spent as a member of the trench 12 excavation team, located on the North Hill, gaining valuable practical experience of excavation in Greece, significantly improving my excavation skills and providing an introduction to recording methods. I also spent a short amount of time working with the ceramic team, during which I processed and recorded ceramic finds including coarse ware, tiles, medium ware and fine wares produced locally and imported from elsewhere in Greece. My knowledge of a wide range of finds materials has been improved as a result. Both the practical experience and the enhanced understanding of the mechanics of data recording will be of significant help during my PhD research, which involves using and interpreting archaeological reports and assemblages.

My PhD examines the social dynamics of communities in archaic Greece, analysing the spatial geography of social nuclei in the built environment to understand the development of communities. One of the questions explored through the Olynthos Project is the processes of community development, investigated through the domestic and civic contexts of occupation.

Houses play an important role in the physical and social environments of a community, for example the large houses of community leaders in the Early Iron Age functioned as important social foci, acting as both the seat of the community leader and the location for communal activities such as feasts¹. The North Hill of Olynthos has a layout that was manufactured through a single process: the bringing together of separate communities into one space for the purpose of artificially creating a new larger communal entity. The communities I am examining in my PhD research also experienced rapid expansion as their populations grew and communities were redefined, a process reflected through the shifting focus and clustering of communities during the archaic period visible in the archaeological evidence of Attika². The evolution of Greek housing and town planning raises important questions about the social and ideological dynamics that shaped the physical remains we are left with today. Was the town planning that provided equal plot sizes for households driven by the concept of egalitarianism: did equal shares of physical space represent equal shares in the civic and political environment of the city? The question of the development of citizenship has played an important role in approaches to understanding the Archaic period³. With its structured town plan, delineating household plots, Olynthos is an interesting Classical example of this approach seemingly realised, acting as an important landmark in the realisation of the *polis* concept. The house the project is excavating explores this created landscape at the household scale and my involvement in the project has proved conceptually useful for my own research.

Expenditure

The bursary had a positive impact on my participation. The £200 went towards the associated costs of participation, including travelling to and from the UK, food and accommodation, and day-to-day costs, all of which totalled an excess of £1000 over the four-week period.

¹ Mitchell L., 2013, *Heroic Rulers of Archaic and Classical Greece*, Bloomsbury, London

² Houby-Nielsen S., 2013, 'Attika: A view from the Sea', in Raaflaub K. A. and van Wees H. (eds.), *A Companion to Archaic Greece*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, pp.189-211

³ Davies J.K., 2013, 'The Historiography of Archaic Greece', in Raaflaub K. A. and van Wees H. (eds.), *A Companion to Archaic Greece*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, pp.3-21