

Report from the 2014 Olwen  
Tudor Jones Scholarship  
recipient

by Hannah Morris



One of the fascinating aspects of Zagora is that, despite being settled almost three thousand years ago, the wealth of archaeological evidence from its occupation lies just inches below the surface. Moreover, Zagora rests largely undisturbed, unexcavated and undeveloped.

Today, instead of people, large mounds of *pinos* (a kind of prickly oak shrub) overrun the site. Every site has its own unique challenges and *pinos* proved to be one of ours. The spiked leaves and branches of the stubborn bushes presented a physical barrier to accessing the archaeological remains. In addition, the enormous root system had to be hacked away. These roots also caused a lot of bioturbation in the soils, churning the earth and disrupting the archaeological contexts.

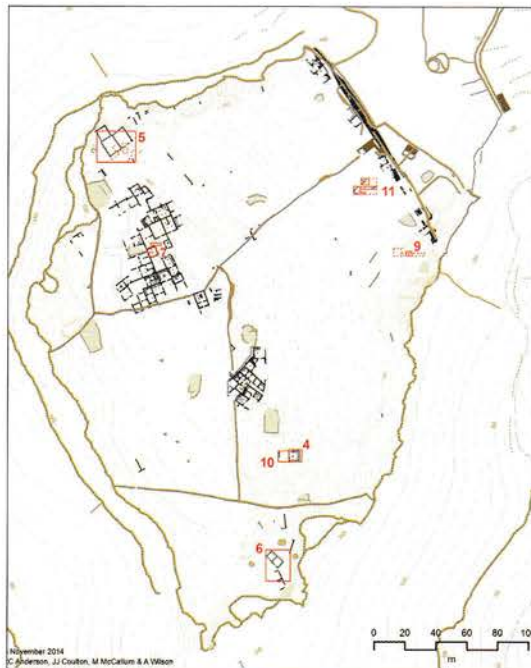
*Pinos* plants have grown up through the numerous piles of stones located across the entire site. These stone heaps themselves suggest structures might be located beneath. The plants have turned the site into a maze, complete with dead-ends. Nevertheless, weaving around the *pinos* and stone mounds in order to travel between the trenches assisted in imagining the site's intricate spatial organisation during its Geometric occupation.

The trenches themselves were located strategically in an attempt to gain insight into different uses of space across the entire site. Trenches incorporated the inside of rooms or house complexes. They

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## Zagora Archaeological Project: 2014 Season

by Stavros A. Paspalas, Margaret C. Miller and Lesley A. Beaumont



Figs. 1–2: Site map and photograph showing location of 2014 trenches

From the outset, the third fieldwork season of the Zagora Archaeological Project (ZAP) promised to be very busy: our 50-person strong team had much digging to do, our many visiting international archaeological specialists had a myriad of analyses to conduct, and we also had an important first phase of ancient architectural conservation to pursue. By the end of the season, tired but happy, we had achieved all of this and more, thanks to the dedication and hard work of all our participants, to the support of the KA' Ephorate of the Greek Archaeological Service, and to the assistance and generosity of all our supporters in Greece and Australia.

Our work was conducted over a six week period from September 22 through November 1, 2014 as a collaborative undertaking of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, the Athens Archaeological Society, the Dept. of Archaeology at the University of Sydney, and the Powerhouse Museum. It was funded by the Australian Research Council. In working at Zagora we are investigating a uniquely well preserved settlement of the Aegean Early Iron Age of the 9th and 8th centuries BC. Our aims are to recover information about the settlement's social structures, communal life, household organisation, inter-settlement relations, technological knowledge, and trading patterns during this formative period of Greek history. The success of the project, begun in 2012, is already apparent in the responses of our international colleagues to our findings, and a number of requests to study material from the site have been received.

The 2014 team was our largest yet, comprising researchers and students, both undergraduate and graduate (fig. 3). ZAP is a great avenue by which Australian students can learn firsthand the techniques of archaeological fieldwork and gain a real appreciation



Fig. 3: ZAP team 2, 2014

of the ancient artefacts and buildings, as well as the people who made and used them millennia ago, and which they would otherwise only study at a great distance. The team also included students from France, Germany, Italy and Turkey, as well as Greece. Thus for our Australian students ZAP is educational not only at a “formal” archaeological level but also at the personal, introducing them to their counterparts from other countries and allowing them to develop an appreciation of a Greek island community.

Seven trenches were opened at a number of points across the site according to a plan that aimed to examine both open, potentially “public”, spaces as well as private and architecturally defined areas (figs. 1–2). In digging Trench 9, we returned to the area approximately 20m southwest of the gate through the ancient fortification wall: here in 2012 and 2013 a deep deposit consisting of ceramics, bronze fragments, obsidian tools and animal bones was found within a large natural cavity in the bedrock. Within this area we were able to recognise successive exterior surfaces, suggestive of a pathway/road or wider open space. The earliest datable material from this trench extends back into the ninth century and possibly the tenth, and so provides us with some of the earliest finds made at the settlement.

Trench 11 was a new trench located about 50 m north of Trench 9, in a part of the site that had never been previously investigated. This “virgin territory” held unexpected, though very welcome, discoveries. These centred on road packing crossed by a constructed stone channel, along with a structure that included a clay-lined schist installation and thick layers of ash. The identity/function of this structure is not immediately apparent and it clearly calls for more research. However, this is the first construction that appears to be “industrial” in nature. That some “industrial” activities took place at Zagora had previously been suggested by the numerous fragments of metal slag—probably smithing detritus—noted throughout the settlement in past seasons; the finds now uncovered in Trench 11 may well broaden the scope of our knowledge of “industrial” processing beyond metal working.

In 2014 in the northernmost area of the site we continued the excavation of Trench 5. This focused on one of the largest enclosed

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also explored open areas, which could be referred to as courtyards, directly adjacent to these structures. Lastly, two trenches investigated open-air areas that were hypothetically communal or public spaces.

Regardless of which trench a ZAP team member worked in, every person excavating became equally acquainted with schist. Schist and marble are the two predominant stones used for building at Zagora. In conjunction with excavating benches, walls and foundations created from schist, it was valuable to witness how the knowledge and use of this material has continued over the centuries in the hills around the site. These include threshing floors, terrace and field walls, house equipment, shepherds' huts and even our own dig hut. The stability of these jigsaw constructions is remarkable.



*View of Zagora with a threshing floor in the foreground*

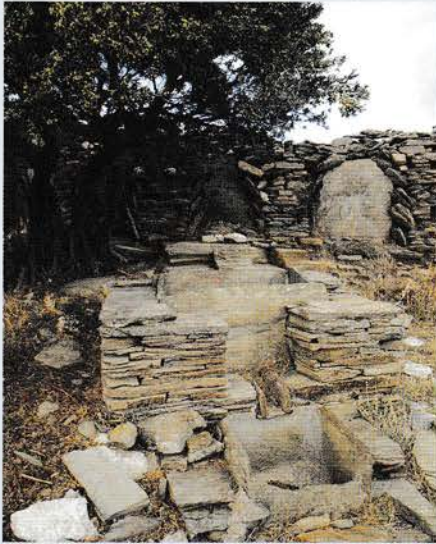
At the end of the season, we were able to experience building with schist and marble firsthand. When backfilling the trenches, retaining walls were constructed around the edges and alongside exposed structures. This conservation approach helps preserve the integrity and stability of the trench baulks and ancient constructions over the coming years. The tactic also verified the amount of time and skill required to create a robust wall, as a result of the thin nature of the pieces of schist. A pleasing thing about Zagora is the way an increased understanding of the site and its materials can be gained from items other than the archaeological finds under the earth.

It is similarly exciting that each year of the Project produces discoveries that provide insight into the landscape and

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people occupying it. At the end of the 2014 season, I was shown something particularly beautiful just off the path to Zagora that we had trekked every day to and from site for three years. Camouflaged against a low schist wall that divided two fields, a solid schist olive press stands below a solitary olive tree. The press consists of a large bin, sealed with a lining that rendered it watertight, and spout leading to a lower and smaller catchment basin.



*Olive press on the path to Zagora*

While the press is relatively modern, seeing it brought some new life back to the landscape dotted with deserted huts, and the occasional herd of sheep grazing on the dry grasses. It hints at the individual's decision to build the structure under the olive tree, and conjures images of the labour-intensive work of producing beautiful green viscous nectar in that press. Lastly, the press reminds of the habitability of Zagora, the abandoned Geometric site, engulfed by *prinos*.

I would like to sincerely thank those involved with the Olwen Tudor Jones Scholarship and the Zagora Archaeological Project for allowing me such a valuable and rewarding experience.

*The OTJ Scholarship is offered each year by the Sydney University Friends of the AAIA to assist a student of high academic achievement to participate in fieldwork in the Mediterranean region. Hannah Morris was the 15th recipient.*

units as yet recognised at Zagora. Measuring 11.5 x 9 m, and perhaps only partially roofed, this structure contained fine ware pottery, including well-preserved drinking vessels, as well as large storage containers. It also produced fragments of a most peculiar pithos with unique incised figured decoration, added before the vessel was fired in the potter's kiln, that features a goat (fig. 4), a stag and a roaring lion (fig. 5).

Closer to the centre of the site excavation of Trench 7 was continued. Here, in 2013 we had uncovered a room that had housed a pithos with truly amazing figured and linear decoration (*Bulletin 10*, 2014 p.14, figs. 7–8). Many worked schist discs, interpreted as vessel lids, were also found in this room.

While it is not totally unexpected to find such discs in close association with pithoi, their large number (more than 30 by the end of the 2014 season!) adds a remarkable note to the room and suggests its use as a storage space prior to its abandonment. Further examination here also determined that the room was built in the last occupation phase of the settlement, no more than a few decades before Zagora ceased to function as a settlement.

In Trench 4 work continued on a room equipped with benches built up against two of its walls and a central hearth surrounded by four stone post bases. The room offers us a clear picture of how domestic space at Zagora could be configured and what installations the settlement's inhabitants included within their homes. Our opening of Trench 10 immediately to the west of Trench 4 revealed that the doorway in the room's west wall led into an open yard, the western extent of which was delineated by a built terrace equipped with a stone step to accommodate the rise in natural ground level. Undoubtedly, much could be learnt by continued future work here about exterior domestic activities and neighbourhood dynamics.

At the very southern point of Zagora the excavation of a free-standing two-roomed structure was completed in Trench 6 (fig. 6). Its marble rubble masonry contrasts to the prevailing schist construction of buildings in the central and northern parts of the settlement. The more



*Figs. 4–5: Details of an incised pithos from Trench 5: a goat and lion*

southerly of the two rooms was roofed and was furnished with a central hearth and a schist-lined bin dug into the floor. The more northerly room appears to have only been partially roofed and was equipped with a bench. The distinction between the two architectural units, originally interconnected by a doorway which was later sealed, is further indicated by the different categories of finds found in each: more fine wares in the southern room, more storage and transport vessels in the northern. Interestingly, the latter space provided limited evidence of sporadic use of the site after it was abandoned about 700 BC. In a layer that was formed after the collapse of its roof but before its walls fell in some material, particularly a lamp datable to the Late Classical period, indicates that somebody found temporary shelter in the half ruined building a good 300 years after its last occupants had left.

Very significantly 2014 saw important steps being undertaken in the conservation of the architecture revealed in the campaigns of the 1960s and '70s. This is a long-term project that demands time, specialised knowledge and funds, and it is an undertaking to which the Australian team is committed. The conservation and preservation of this unique settlement site is an obligation not only to the Greek authorities who have allowed us to work at Zagora, but also to all those—worldwide—interested in mankind's cultural heritage. We are more than fortunate that the on-going site conservation project is in the hands of Dr Stefania Chlouveraki, Greece's leading specialist in the field. In 2014 she and her skilled technicians carried out conservation work on the important Archaic temple that was built at the heart of the site after the abandonment of the settlement (figs. 7–8). Future work will focus on the preserving many of the excavated Early Iron Age houses.

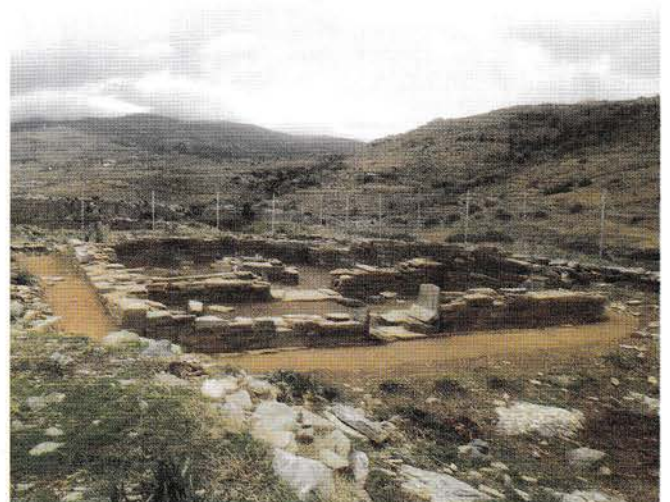
During the 2014 field season we had the pleasure of welcoming to Zagora, and guiding over the site, the recently arrived Australian ambassador to Greece, H.E. Mr John Griffin (fig. 2 on p. 5). We were also able to repay in some small measure the hospitality, support, generosity and interest of our many friends and well-wishers on Andros by delivering in Greek an illustrated public lecture on our excavations as well as by conducting two guided tours over the site. Happily, these were very popular events attended by many Andriots, including the island's mayor, and which underlined the ongoing Australian commitment to the archaeology of Andros.



*Fig. 6: Students at work in Trench 6*



*Fig. 7: The Archaic Temple prior to conservation*



*Fig. 8: The Archaic Temple after conservation*