Harding University in Greece (HUG): Spring 2014

Report #4

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After returning from our tour in Turkey, we had about a week's worth of classes before other trips were scheduled; this time, however, the trips' itineraries and travel arrangements were independently planned by the students. Most of the students went to Italy; one group went to Spain. I, however, returned to Israel to visit archaeology colleagues and discuss elements of the Beth-shemesh excavations. Some exciting things are emerging from our work at Beth-shemesh—some even having direct impact on the chronological sequence and dating of the Minoan and Mycenaean worlds![1] We anxiously await the evaluations by the Mediterranean scholars about our finds from 2009.

One goal was to visit the Israel Museum again. When we visited Israel earlier in the semester, we were unable to enter the main part of the museum, but saw only the model of first century Jerusalem and the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. I was anxious to see the general displays, but in this visit I could spend as much time as I wanted since the students were otherwise engaged. Five hours later I emerged with over 800 photographs! Don't worry, there are no plans to show them all to *any* of you! Some, however, already appear in my class discussions and other PowerPoint presentations as new material and/or updates with newer and better pictures.

After another class interlude, we departed for the northern Greece trip. The first stop was in Delphi—a scene of ancient notoriety because of the belief that the priestess of Delphi, usually referred to as an "Oracle," could predict the future. Ancient monarchs and kingdoms often sent representatives to her to determine future events, although her insights were usually of sufficient ambiguity that regardless of the outcome, she was right!

The temple to Apollo, who was the sponsor of the priestess and in whose honor the facility is dedicated, stood on the side of a steep hill (temple foundations in photo right). Scholars have identified two fissures that intersect beneath the "holy of holies" of the structure where the priestess would retreat to receive her vision. She was

[1] These articles just came out and trace the significance of the discovery of our Minoan cups along with the large ceremonial scarab of Amenhotep III. See Shlomo Bunimovitz, Zvi Lederman and Eleni Hatzaki, "Knossian Gifts? Two Late Minoan IIIA1 Cups from Tel Beth-Shemesh, Israel," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 108/1 (2013): 51-66; and Baruch Brandl, Shlomo Bunimovitz, and Zvi Lederman, "Beth-Shemesh and Sellopoulo: Two Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III and Their Contribution to Aegean Chronology," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 108/1 (2013): 67-95.

sometimes described as a "pythian spirit." Scholars infer that hallucinogenic gases rose through the earth's crust, prompting the priestess to utter statements and remarks that other priests then "interpreted" and conveyed to the inquiring agents. Over time, with shifting tectonic activity the gas emissions ceased and the Oracle's work diminished in significance.[2]

A feature that had not been pointed out to me in earlier visits is a tunnel entrance into the area beneath the "holy of holies" (Missy Denton entering tunnel in photo right). This tunnel may have been connected with the visions of the Oracle (might one assume that the priests might have prompted the Oracle priestess to say certain things in her altered state?). In addition, the guide suggested that a certain stone with three indentations and another hole penetrating its thickness might have been the stone on which the ceremonial tripod rested and through which the gases may have risen into the Oracles' chamber (photo right). The stone then might have been able to be blocked to restrict the gases' circulation. Tantalizing to say the least.

Isaiah alludes to communications from the earth (dealing with necromancy, however) in Isaiah 29:4 when he condemns Jerusalem as a dead person. Communication with the dead involved listening to "speech" from beneath the earth: "You will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust your speech will be bowed down; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper." Earlier, Isaiah had described thos who "communicate" from the world of the dead as those who "chirp and mutter" (Isa 8:19). Hallucinogens probably were a means by which one contacted the dead and through which they were thought to communicate. Corroboratively, Paul's reference to witchcraft/sorcery in Galatians 5:20 is the Greek word φαρμακεια (*pharmakeia*) from which we get the word "pharmacy."[3]

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[2]See Jelle Zeilinga de Boer and John R. Hale, "The Oracle of Delphi—Was She Really Stoned? *Archaeology Odyssey* 5/6 (2002): 46-53, 58-59.

[3] φαρμακεια and its derivatives appear in a number of ancient sources, including the LXX, to refer usually to sorcery, witchcraft, magic and poisons (see entry in Frederick W. Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000. Pp. 1049-50).

After our departure from Delphi we headed to Meteora, the site of many monasteries perched on the top of spires reaching into the heavens (one is on the pinnacle in the middle and another is just on the cliff to the right)! It is a breathtaking scene! The monks living on these spires were supported by people who delivered goods to them by means rope-drawn baskets. The goods included building materials from which the monks built their houses. The priests devote their time to prayer—much like the monks of the Mount Athos monasteries. These monasteries began in the 11th century and eventually dozens were built, but now very few remain active. The main sustaining component is the tourists, who fortunately access the structures more conveniently by steps! One tradition was that the ropes on the hoists would not be replaced until they broke! A rather sobering statement of faith! I must confess, I had prefer not to tempt God and simply wait until the rope broke.

One item of particular interest was a huge wine keg built in the 16th century (David Brooker in photo right). Its design was very impressive to accommodate the expansion and contraction of the wood. The capacity was 12,000 liters (=3170 gallons!) of wine. Not only was there a large volume of wine possible, but also many trips to the hoist to bring up either the wine or the grapes! Somebody must have been "Happy, happy, happy!"

Vergina was our next stop. This was the home territory of Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander (the Great). We did not visit the town's palace, but went to the tumulus where Philip II was buried. Its discovery in 1977-78 was sensational in that it was unlooted and the goods were still intact similar Howard Carter's sensational discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. The Greeks did a wonderful job of recreating the sense of the tomb by leaving it in the tumulus with the soil overhead (although significantly reduced in height; see photo left).

The remains of what almost certainly was Philip II have been discovered along with rich deposits of armor, gold and ivory grave goods. Philip II was assassinated in Vergina at the wedding of his daughter in 336 BC and, of course, the rule passed to his son, Alexander.

Vergina was the major administrative center of ancient Macedonia until Pella was established several miles away in ca. 400 BC. Pella then gained the administrative ascendancy, but Vergina retained its royal favoritism, hence the burial. The tumulus encompassed the burials of several individuals, but most notable were those of Philip II. The front chamber of the tomb preserved a casket containing the cremated remains of a woman, who most assume was Cleopatra, Philip's last wife (*not* to be confused with the better known Cleopatra of Egypt). Another tomb nearby contained the cremated remains of a young male who is usually identified with Alexander IV. He had been born by Alexander the Great's Iranian wife, Roxanne, soon after Alexander the Great died. Both Alexander IV and Roxanne were murdered in ca 310 BC by Cassander, who had functionally taken over the rule of the region.

In addition to the intrinsic wealth reflected in the tomb assemblage, all of the forensic evidence corroborates a legitimate identification with Philip II. The age of the person who died, along with a major injury to the skull over the right eye, which would have blinded the individual dovetail with data known from Philip's life. He died at 46 years of age and had sustained an arrow injury to his right eye when 28 years of age which resulted in his loss of that eye.

(From this point in the discussion, the itinerary appears in reverse order of how we visited the sites. This will accommodate the direction of Paul's itinerary through Macedonia on his way to Athens.)

Kavala is the current name of the town mentioned in Acts 16:11 as Neapolis. Neapolis actually means "new city," but it is not clear in reference to what it was new when it was named. It was, however, where Paul first landed in his journey into Europe, but the Bible says nothing about any kind of ministry here. It served as the port city for Philippi, which is over a ridge in the valley north of Neapolis. Nothing from the time of Paul is exposed here, but many who see the impressive stretch of aqueduct would think it was built by the Romans (upper left), but it was built by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century.

An ancient road passes over the ridge form Neapolis to Philippi and part of it is still exposed (photo left). I was able this year to walk on it and easily imagine Paul and his company making their way over this to Philippi where Paul would begin his response to his vision of the Macedonian call (cf. Acts 16:9-10).

Philippi was originally known as Krenides ("little spring"), but was renamed Philippi by Philip II in 356 BC when he conquered the city. It first came under Roman rule in 168 BC, but its privileged colony status occurred after 42 BC when Octavian (later known as Augustus) and Mark Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius in battles in the area. Octavian and Antony were retaliating against Brutus and Cassius for their roles in Julius Caesar's assassination.

As a Roman colony (Acts 16:12), Philippi was a political "island" of Rome in the middle of foreign land. Roman laws and traditions governed the citizens who, therefore, were not subject to the local laws of the provinces. In addition, Philippi became a town accommodating Roman military veterans and as one might suspect, Roman gods characterized the city---Jupiter, Neptune and Mercury.

The ruins preserve a theatre part of which dates from the time of Philip, but the Romans later converted it to accommodate gladiatorial games (photo left). Excavations have identified a trap door and underground facilities to house wild animals, which could be released into the theatre for the "entertainment" of the crowds. Mee and Spawforth refer to a tombstone monument on which a local person "had once paid for a programme of seven pairs of gladiators and four wild-beast hunts, and for the sprinkling of saffron perfume to mask the smells"[4]—a rather grisly image. The dates for these developments, however, postdate Paul by some two centuries.

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[4] Christopher Mee and Antony Spawforth, *Greece: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 415.

Paul's first engagement in Philippi was to exit the city to where there was supposed to be a place of prayer by the riverside (Acts 16:13). While we cannot know for sure where this was, one of the candidates is a location west of the city. It is beautiful and serene and certainly conducive to meditation and reflection (photo right). Paul's inclination to go there was likely prompted by the fact that as a Roman colony of fairly recent establishment and designed for veterans, there were probably few Jews in the city. According to Jewish tradition, unless there is a *minyan* (a group of ten Jewish males) there cannot be a synagogue. A lack of Jewish population might explain this riverside alternative by the women and people to engage in worship to God in some other setting.

Paul's work in Philippi eventually ran afoul of some "human traffickers," who were using a slave girl to their end. Most Bibles read that she had a "spirit of divination" which translates the Greek phrase "pythian spirit" (Acts 16:16)—an interesting phrase that reverberates with the pythian spirit of Delphi (see above). The discussion of what Paul and Silas saw as inappropriate in her declarations is another topic, but the Holy Spirit through Paul and Silas cast out the spirit from the girl. The "traffickers" saw their avenue of gain was gone and brought charges against Paul in the marketplace/agora (see photo right; the ruins of the agora in the photo date from the 2d century AD, but likely rest on the ruins of the agora/marketplace of Paul's day). The authorities succumbed to the mob mentality of the occasion and beat Paul and Silas throwing them into prison.

Many tourists will be shown the "prison" in the accompanying photograph (left), but this is a cistern associated with a much later church building. More likely the prison was to the west end of the agora and has yet to be excavated. If anyone has a truck load of money, I know an archaeologist…..

As you might suspect, Christianity eventually gained a foothold in Philippi and remains of several early church buildings are scattered through the site. The earliest seems to date from the early 4th century AD but is now surmounted with an octagonal one built ca. 350 AD. This one has a beautifully constructed cross-shaped baptistery associated with it (photo right).

After some legal maneuvering, Paul was shuttled off westward where he passed through Amphipolis (Acts 17:1). We did not stop at the city (no evidence that Paul did either), but we stopped near a river where a massive lion statue rests on a platform (photo right). It appears that the lion was originally on the pinnacle of a mound as part of a funerary monument. Some suggest it commemorated Laomedon, an officer in Alexander's army, and some evidence is currently being evaluated which may help further identify the monument's significance. Given the massive size of the lion and its probable crowning position on a tumulus, Paul likely saw this as he passed through the area.

We spent two nights in Thessalonica. Paul spent at least three sabbaths here as he preached in the synagogue to the Jews (Acts 17:2). Not much from Paul's time is visibly preserved, but we saw part of the Roman Forum (lower left) that would likely have been part of Paul's venue of preaching, given his propensity to frequent high traffic areas to try to tell Jesus' message.

Thessalonica, being along the sea and also on the Via Egnatia, was an important point of intersection. The town received its name when Cassander, who had killed Roxanne and Alexander IV (see above), named the city after his wife who was Philip II's daughter (hence a sister or half-sister of Alexander the Great). Its strategic location played into the politics and vicissitudes of the area into the Gothic invasions and then into the time of the Avars and

Slavs. The current fortification walls and towers are impressive, but date from the third century and after.

When Paul was ushered from Thessalonica, he went to Berea (Acts 17:10). Berea does not preserve anything visible from Paul's time. One may, however, visit a restored synagogue dating from the 1800s which might stand on earlier ruins of a synagogue, but connections with Paul are tenuous at best. There is a monument in Berea of Paul's visit and some argue that the rise of three steps is a sort of judgment seat/*bema* upon which Paul spoke, but the Bible says nothing of this.

Jews from Thessalonica found out that Paul was preaching in Berea and they came to agitate against his preaching (Acts 17:13). Paul escaped the turmoil when his comrades ushered him to the sea where he departed for Athens (Acts 17:14-15). There is some question of whether Paul traveled by sea or simply went to the sea and traveled along its shore. Probably he went by sea to Athens. Dion is one proposed port town from which he might have departed.

Dion is a corruption of Zeus and the name honors him. The town is at the foot of Mt. Olympus, which was the home of the Greek gods. It was snow capped when we visited which made for a fantastic view (upper corner left). Like Philippi, Dion was a Roman colony (although not necessarily populated with veterans) and was laid out in a grid pattern with well-constructed Roman roads (center left). Temples to Isis, Demeter, Zeus and other deities are sprinkled throughout the ruins. It seems odd for Isis, an Egyptian goddess, to be held in such high honor in Greece and especially at the foot of Mt. Olympus, the home of the Greek gods. While the female goddesses of adoration were originally Aphrodite and Artemis, Alexander the Great apparently held Isis in such honor (as indicated by his designation of a temple to Isis' honor when he initiated the construction of Alexandria in Egypt), that the people of Dion followed his lead to dedicate a temple to Isis. The temple is now inundated with water (bottom left).

Two parallel walls are thought to represent the Nile River, which of course was sacred to the Egyptians (photo left). It appears to me that the higher water table has compromised the physical appearance of the shrine.

A particularly notable artifact in the museum at Dion is a "water pipe" musical instrument dating from the 1st century BC (center left). It had varying lengths of bronze tubes decorated with silver each of which would create a distinct note. The sound was produced by pressurized air forced through water into a box below. The concept was devised in the 3rd century BC by an Alexandrian engineer named Ktesibios. Because of design and technological typology, this example is thought to have been made in the 1st century BC.

After lunch, we began our sojourn back to the Artemis in Porto Rafti, but one more brief stop awaited us. About two-thirds of the way back, we visited the site of Thermopylae—the scene of a major battle between the Greeks and the Persians. This encounter has been popularized again with the issue of the movie *300* and the recent release of another movie by the same title! There were more than 300 people involved, though. The 300 were the Spartan detail under the leadership of Leonidas, king of Sparta. Xerxes and his Persian army, in an attempt to rectify the defeat of Darius and the Persians ten years earlier at Marathon, had come to conquer the Greeks. According to Herodotus, the Greeks had ca. 6000 people while the Persians came with a force of 300,000 (*Hist*. 7.228). While the number for the Persians is certainly exaggerated, the number of troops on the opposing armies were by no means balanced. The advantage for the Greeks was the narrow pass along the coast, which they could defend with a reasonable sense of confidence.

The Greeks repelled several Persian attacks. The Persians, however, eventually found a Greek who betrayed the Greeks and led Persian troops behind the Greeks through a pass encompassing them with no avenue of escape. Leonidas had enough time to release the Greeks

to return to their homes (to be able to fight again), while he, his Spartans, and 700 men of Boiotian Thespiai stalled the Persians in battle. Leonidas and his men retreated to the mound in the photo (left) where they were eventually defeated in a cloud of arrows (below left; cf. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.226; photo is from my 2010 HUG appointment and from a display that was in the National Archaeology Museum showing some of the weapons retrieved in the excavation; analysis shows that most of the arrowheads and spear points are of Asian origin). Archaeological work has been able to retrace the lines of attack and defeat, demonstrating the intensity of the final battle and the valor of the few Greeks who held the Persians at bay for a little longer; this permitted the remainder of the Greek mainland to prepare for the final stands. Fortunately, the Persians were eventually roundly defeated at Salamis and then at Plateaia in 480 and 479 respectively. The Persians never attempted to invade Greece again.

The site is simple but sobering. A large monument honors Leonidas and the Spartans, but eventually another was erected to honor the Thespians who remained to defend the country as well. One wonders about the terrain, but the geographical studies show that the sea is now about 5 kilometers (ca. 3.1 miles) further away than it was in 480 BC. At the time of this engagement, the coastal pass was only about fifteen meters (appr. 50 feet) wide.[5]

One wonders what would have become of the Greco-Roman world and so-called Western Civilization had the Persians conquered Greece!

Our arrival at the Artemis was a relief from the long bus ride, but our minds and spirits had been filled with rich information upon which to reflect and meditate (and test!). The main emphasis at the Artemis now was to prepare for the finals after which we all could relax with a four-day cruise on the Mediterranean—installment number 5 in this series!

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[5] Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 203.