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SPECIAL SECTION

Lidar and Landscapes in the Archaeology of Greece

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Over the last decade, several projects in Greece have integrated lidar into their research programs in a variety of ways. The technology and its applications are still new enough, however, that there has been little opportunity for disciplinary dialogue on the subject. The conference, *Lidar and Landscapes in the Archaeology of Greece: An International Workshop*, which we co-organized at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in March of 2024, aimed to open a forum for lidar-based archaeological research in Greece. The number and range of presentations and the robust in-person and online attendance confirmed the depth of interest in the technology, the broad scope of its application, and the types of research questions it might help to illuminate.

At the workshop, certain key themes emerged that are developed in the set of articles presented here. They include the powerful imaging strengths of lidar, the value of combining lidar with other remote sensing and terrestrial imaging technologies, and the centrality of ground-truthing to the interpretive process, as well as some reflection on circumstances in which lidar is less useful. While most work has been developed around aircraft acquisition, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV/drone) based lidar acquisition, along with photogrammetry, offer incremental and more economical approaches, and also provide powerful results. Good practices concerning data acquisition, image processing, analytical workflow, and assessments of accuracy that have been developed by multiple teams are now in a position to benefit from collective scrutiny.

In this special collection of articles, nearly half focus on Aegean island landscapes, from the small Cycladic islands to the second-largest island in the Aegean, Euboea. Central Greece forms another area of investigation (Phokis, Thessaly, and Boeotia). While reflective of the research interests of the authors, these types of landscapes offer significant research advantages in the deployment of lidar imaging. Islands form microcosms in which access, development, and change can be tracked within finite boundaries. The less populated rolling and often-wooded landscapes of Central Greece offer opportunities to develop large scale terrain models that penetrate tree canopy.

The opportunity lidar affords for regional-scale documentation is already changing the shape of environmental and cultural heritage research in Greece. Increasingly, it has become a methodological point of departure for regionally based archaeological investigations. The papers presented here help to define this emerging trajectory while presenting valuable new insights concerning the human and natural shaping of landscapes in Greece.

We are very grateful to the American School of Classical Studies for their sponsorship of this workshop, as well as to several other institutions that expressed enthusiasm in the early stages of

planning, namely the German Archaeological Institute at Athens, the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece, and the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades. We especially wish to thank several individuals at the American School who contributed to the organization and operation of the conference. Konstantinos Tzortzinis provided invaluable support in managing presentations, audio-visual systems, and the creation of a conference website and online platform for the presentations. Christiana Davies worked on the creation and dissemination of announcements and conference materials and Mimi Palomino-Gamba assisted with the operation of the conference in Athens. Niamh Michalopoulou, Katerina Patayia, and Georgia Bello kept the group well-fueled during coffee breaks. Periklis Boutsoukis and the AeroPhoto team deserve special mention here as well, as enthusiastic participants and presenters at the conference, as well as vendors for much of the data presented here. We are most grateful to all conference participants and authors in this collection for their contributions. Finally, we thank an anonymous peer reviewer and John Bintliff, General Editor of *Journal of Greek Archaeology*, for his interest and support throughout the editorial and review process.

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