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Κλεοπάτρα Παπαευαγγέλου-Γκενάκου. 2020. *Εκ θεμελιών*. Αθήνα: Τράπεζα της Ελλάδος – Κέντρο Πολιτισμού Έρευνας και Τεκμηρίωσης. Pp. 391. ISBN 978-960-7032-97-3.

When Athens became the capital of Greece in 1833–1834, it was hardly able to sustain any form of central government. A grand project of urban planning, therefore, had to be designed, funded, and executed between the 1830s and the 1940s, in order to supply the emerging conglomerate with a much-needed infrastructure.

Greece's Central Bank –Trapeza tis Ellados, internationally known as “Bank of Greece” (not to be confused with National Bank of Greece, a privately owned commercial bank funded in 1841 and now developed into a global banking and financial services company)– was founded in 1927. It was housed in its current headquarters –a typical example of the austere Neoclassicism of the Greek interwar years situated on 21 Venizelou (formerly Panepistimiou) Street– in 1938. Since its inauguration, the building has been extended both horizontally and vertically, with the addition, over the years, of new wings and further floors.

One such major expansion occurred in the 1970s, when the Bank's flagship building was expanded to occupy the entire urban block surrounded by Venizelou, Edourdou Lo, Stadiou, and Omirou streets. It was then that, during the digging works for the construction of the new building's foundations, a small number of archaeological finds were located and partially recorded. Forty-three out of these artefacts were retained by the Bank, and now form part of its Art Collection, fully registered with the Greek State.

The book by archaeologist Papaeuaggelou-Genakou constitutes the first, and full, publication of these pieces, but also offers an account of the area where the building is situated, and a highly informative discussion of the archaeological background of that particular part of Athens at large. Since the site where the Bank of Greece headquarters now stand lay outside the ancient city's walls, the excavated finds belong to a cemetery, apparently used from the 9th century B.C. all the way down to the first centuries A.D.

The earliest find recorded in the book is an intact Middle Geometric belly amphora, which may have been used as a burial urn. There follows a series of white-ground and red-figure lekythoi from the 5th century that may have belonged to the same grave, a number of late-Classical and Hellenistic urguentaria, a 4th-century red-figure krater, various cups and “saucers”, as well as a number of pyxides, terracottas, lamps, and loom weights.

The book's second part is devoted to the site's afterlife as well as the excavation's aftermath. The author makes an excellent effort to reconstruct the hastily excavated site through any existing scraps of evidence. She rightly connects the finds of this particular plot with the so-called “northeastern cemetery” of ancient Athens, extending from present-day Syntagma Square (where one can still locate the course of Athens's fortification wall) and all the way to almost present-day Omonoia Square, following the routes of the main ancient thoroughfares leading to the Attic countryside. A major contribution to our knowledge of this necropolis was made by the rescue

excavations preceding the construction of the Athens Metro in the 1990s, mostly on present-day Amerikis and Korai Streets.

A third part of the book is dedicated to the more recent history of the site and its environs. Drawing from a wide range of archival materials –maps, charts, and drawings, as well as early photography and press reports– the author manages to reconstruct the history of a vital part of central Athens, and paint a spectacularly vivid image of its social, political and economic life.

Dr. Papaeuaggelou-Genakou, as well as the Centre for Culture, Research and Documentation of the Bank of Greece, on whose initiative this book has been published, ought to be congratulated for this lavish, as well as informative and inspiring publication. Even if –quite regrettably– this is a publication of haphazardly “rescued”, poorly documented and contextless archaeological material, the historical documentation provided by the book manages to compensate to a great extent for what was irrevocably lost when the Bank’s new foundations were being laid.