

THE ZEA HARBOUR PROJECT THE GREATEST CATCH

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Column base in the colonnade dividing Shipsheds 1 and 2 (Vassilis Tsiairis)

It was an old fisherman named Mitsakos who in 2010 guided the Zea Harbour Project to the naval bases from the time around the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC. As a child, he fished while sitting on an ancient column rising from the sea on the northern side of Mikrolimano Harbour in the Piraeus, on what was once part of the ancient naval base called Mounichia. The project had previously investigated this area and found only a few dislocated ancient blocks.

This part of the harbour is a maze of anchors, mooring chains, and modern debris. On most days, one can only see 20–50 centimetres underwater. Mitsakos guided underwater archaeologists Panagiotis Athanasopoulos and Vassilis Tsiairis to the location, and they surfaced with wide smiles and shining eyes. In a relatively short time, they had found an ancient monumental wall and several large foundation blocks in a colonnade.

This lecture will present Shipshed 1, the earliest identified building in the Athenian naval bases in the Piraeus, and the earliest identifiable trireme shipshed found in the ancient world. Furthermore, the lecture will discuss if a hitherto unknown building phase in the monumental harbour fortifications at Mounichia can also be associated with the Themistoklean building program in the Piraeus.

The Zea Harbour Project operates under the auspices of the Danish Institute at Athens and is directed by Senior Researcher Dr. Bjørn Lovén. The project is supervised by the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities and the Ephorate of Piraeus and the Islands. The Carlsberg Foundation has been the project's principal sponsor since 2004.

